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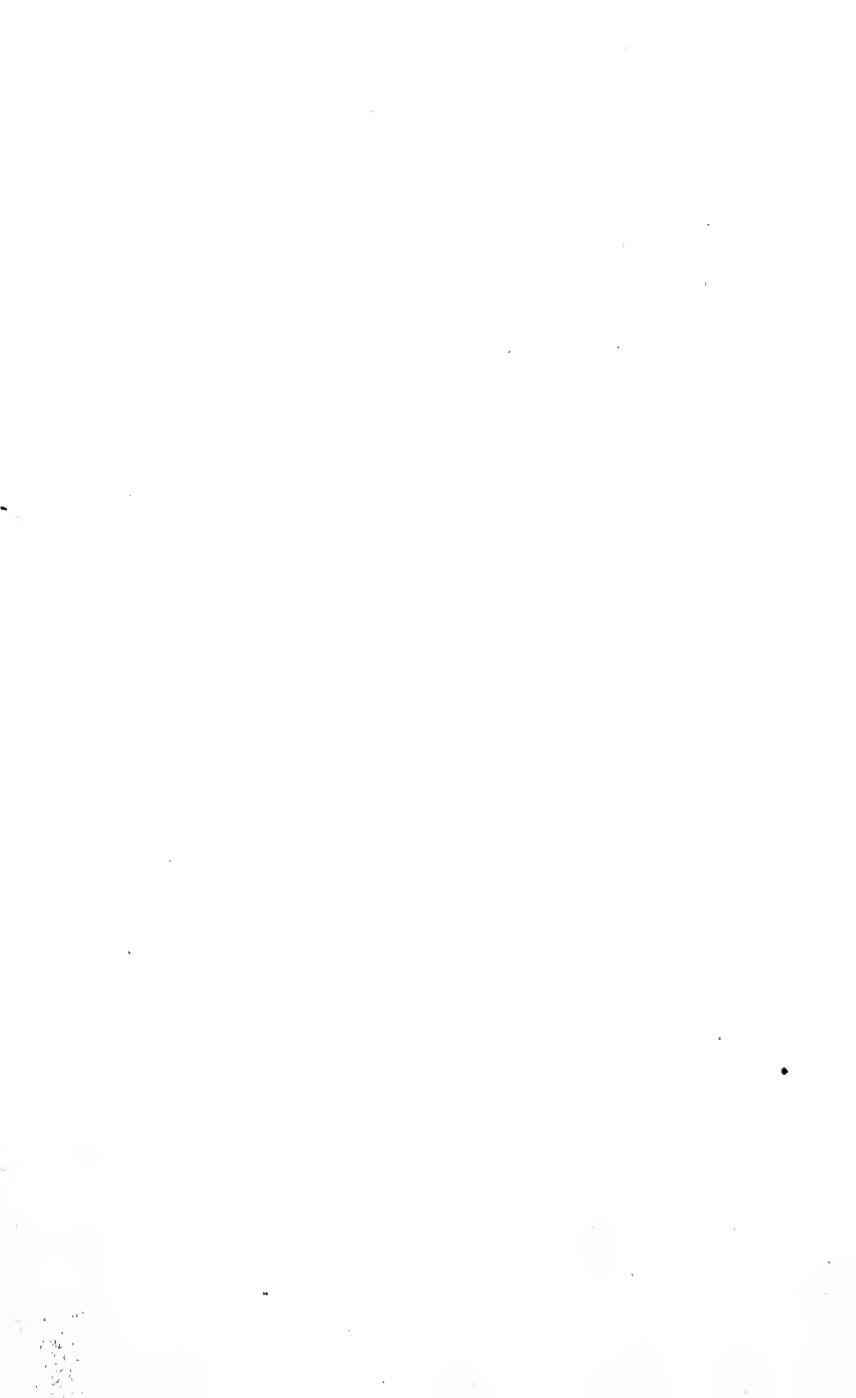
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**THESE MANY YEARS**



# THESE MANY YEARS

RECOLLECTIONS OF A NEW YORKER

BY

BRANDER MATTHEWS

PROFESSOR OF DRAMATIC LITERATURE IN COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

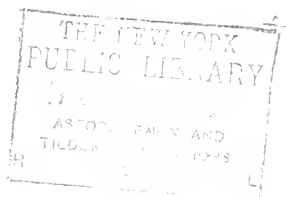
MEMBER OF

THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND LETTERS

NEW YORK

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1917



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IN MEMORIAM

EDWARD MATTHEWS

1814-1887

VIRGINIA BRANDER MATTHEWS

1827-1903



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**THESE MANY YEARS**



# THESE MANY YEARS

## CHAPTER I

### THE POINT OF VIEW

#### I

**W**HEN a man squares himself at his desk and for a moment stays his hand from the pen while he tries to “squeeze the sponge of memory” — to borrow the apt phrase of Henry James — when he seeks to recall and to set in order his most salient recollections, he finds himself confronted by the duty of making a choice between the two kinds of autobiography, loosely so called. He must decide whether he will write mainly about himself, bringing up to date the log of his own lonely voyage thru life, or whether he will not talk mainly about others, about his fellow-passengers on that Noah’s Ark whereon we are all of us embarked as it drifts over the endless waters. If he shall choose rather to recall what he remembers about others than what he remembers about himself, the result will be only a book of reminiscences and not a true autobiography. And a book of reminiscences, however valuable it may be, is necessarily less valuable than a true autobiog-

raphy, since a man can know other men only from the outside, whereas he ought to know himself from the inside.

Not only is the true autobiography likely to have solidier qualities than the book of reminiscences, it ought also to be more amusing for its maker; it ought to be more fun for him (and therefore to have more flavor for those who may read it), because altho we may like to gossip about others we dearly love to chatter about ourselves. In fact, the only two occasions when a man has the privilege of amply expressing himself, and of telling what he thinks and feels, are when he summons the family physician to listen to his self-scrutiny and when he solicits the gentle reader to assume the same attitude. A bore has been defined as a man who wants to talk about himself when you want to talk about yourself. Yet even by this condemnatory definition the autobiographer escapes, for when the gentle reader settles himself under the evening lamp and before the wood-fire with a book in his hand, he does not then desire to talk about himself, whatever may be his wishes at other moments. What the gentle reader demands is that the autobiographer shall so talk about himself as to make his interest in his personal theme more or less contagious — that he shall somehow and in some measure transmit to others the pleasure he finds in his gossip about himself. “Truly, I think,” so the candid Sir Walter Scott made one of his characters confess, “writing history (one’s self being the subject) is at any time as amusing as reading that of foreign countries.”



The autobiographer may be at fault in thinking that he can carry over to the reader any part of the delight he has taken in his selfish task; and he may even err in thinking that there is any call for the telling of his life. Yet even the most insignificant and unworthy of autobiographers is after all a human being; and the life of any human being has its worth and its significance. The superiority of autobiography over every other form of biography has been asserted by two American authors, neither of whom oddly enough left behind him his own account of his own career. Longfellow, in one of his note-books, asserted playfully that "autobiography is what biography ought to be"; and Holmes, in one of his essays, declared that "there are but two biographers who can tell the story of a man's or a woman's life. One is the person himself or herself; the other is the Recording Angel. The autobiographer cannot be trusted to tell the whole truth, tho he may tell nothing but the truth; and the Recording Angel never lets his book out of his own hands."

The whole truth the autobiographer cannot tell for many reasons, partly because it is given to no man to know the whole truth — especially about himself. His personal equation prevents him from taking an absolutely accurate observation of his own deeds and of his own moods. The whole truth he cannot hope to tell; and perhaps his ambition to tell nothing but the truth is as futile. To do this may be his sole ambition, yet it is unattainable by human infirmity. However honest a man may

be and however little of romanticism he may have in him, he cannot help poetizing his own part, mixing fancy with his facts, *Dichtung* with *Wahrheit*. The sponge of memory, even when pressed by clean hands, can rarely give us the pure water of truth, for the stream that drips from it must be more or less muddied by our likes and dislikes, earlier and later. If we cannot rely on our observation of life, how can we put confidence in our memories? The physiologists tell us that a man is made over at least once in seven years; and how shall a man made over again and again be trusted to recapture from one of his vanished selves the fleeting feelings of that departed entity?

“Memory is never purely passive, and therefore never absolutely faithful,” we were told by Jules Lemaître, that most suggestive of French critics, always alert to the world at large, even when he was playfully centering his immediate attention on the passing shows presented in the minor theaters of Paris. “Its activity is constant and not to be coerced. At bottom memory is not to be distinguished — except chronologically — from imagination, to which it furnishes materials, but materials already rehandled and altered. Never do we remember things exactly. Always what we are, what we feel at the present moment, modifies in our own eyes what we felt and what we were in the past.”

This is uncontrovertible; and it is a warning to be heeded by the wary autobiographer. Strive as he may, he will err; and he will do well to recognize frankly in advance the pitiful fact that the picture

of life he is about to present cannot avoid a resemblance more or less close to the absurd reflections of those convex or concave mirrors which distort the faces and the figures of grinning rustics in the side-show of the circus. And the more clearly this warning rings in the ear of the autobiographer, and the more often it checks the momentum of his self-confidence, the more likely is he to attain to that approximate verity which is the utmost he can hope to achieve. He can find a second warning in a saying of Mark Twain's, when approaching threescore years and ten: "When I was younger I could remember anything whether it happened or not — but now I'm getting old, and soon I shall remember only the latter." More than once as I have evoked the past in preparation for these pages, I have recalled events at which I have fondly believed myself to have been a spectator, only to discover that I was deluding myself by remembering what had not happened; and I can only hope that I may make this discovery as often as I may be in danger of deluding the reader.

## II

It was, I think, in the first year of the twentieth century that a student in the Columbia Law School, who was taking a course of mine on the development of modern fiction, asked me to read a short-story of his; and when he came back for my criticism I told him that it was a good enough tale, and that it seemed to show his possession of the gift of

narrative, but that it lacked the flavor of individuality, since it contained nothing to differentiate it sharply from other good-enough tales.

"What do you know," I asked, "that nobody else knows? — or at least that nobody else has written about? Every one of us has had experiences denied to the rest of his fellow men; and this is the stuff out of which he can create literature with the most likelihood of its interesting the rest of us. What have you yourself seen that might be unhackneyed material or atmosphere or background for fiction?"

"I know the lumber camps of Michigan," was his prompt answer.

"Is the life out there interesting?" I inquired.

"Very interesting," he responded.

"Well, then," I went on, "if you have found it interesting, so may your readers. Why not write about that?" So it was that a few months later Mr. Stewart Edward White sent me the 'Blazed Trail.'

And now when I seek to record my own retrospections I must, perforce, put my own question to myself. What have I to tell? What have I seen that others have not seen? What special experiences have I had to lend the flavor of individuality to these recollections of a man of letters? Even if the panorama of life, as it has unrolled itself before my gaze for more than threescore years, has keenly interested me, what reason have I to suppose that my report of it will have any attraction for gentle readers? Probably, like any other

man talking to himself, I am not insistent upon a convincing answer to these questions. Yet if I must respond to my own interrogatories, I can only declare, first, that I have been singularly fortunate in my friends and acquaintance, since I have known more or less intimately many men who were very well worth knowing. Second, I should add that I have chanced to be present on more than one occasion when things happened — things of a certain historic interest. Thirdly, and finally, I should allege that the angle from which I surveyed these things and these men was all my own, since it is very unlikely that any other person who may have known these men and seen these things regarded them from the point of view personal to me.

This personal point of view was the result of my training for an unusual profession; and what made my position the more peculiar was that I was never permitted to practise this profession for which I had been prepared, whereas most of those who have practised it do so without the preparation I had received to qualify me to exercise it. This profession was that of millionaire, a calling less thickly populated half a century ago than it is now. For this profession I was deliberately educated by my father, who was frank in informing me in my youth that when I grew up I should not have to earn my own living. It was to be my task in life not to make money, but to administer an ample fortune, and to spend it as it ought to be spent, for my own advantage and for public service. My father had made the money for me, his only son, and there

would be an abundance of it; and the wherewithal being thus provided, it was for me to fulfil the large but dimly envisaged ambitions he had formed for me. Altho he never clearly stated his hopes, I think that they turned in the direction of politics, and that he foresaw my entrance into public life, very much as tho I were an elder son, heir of an ancestral estate in Great Britain, whose place in Parliament was duly awaiting his majority.

To be a millionaire as my father conceived it for me was to practise one of the learned professions, as necessary to the state as any one of its older brethren, medicine or the law or the church. Altho my father in those days of my youth was immersed in affairs, busily engaged in accumulating wealth for my future use, money itself was very rarely a topic of conversation in our family circle. As we had it, there was no need to talk about it; and it was taken as a matter of course. Only when we ceased to have it did it begin to bulk bigger in our thoughts and in our converse. As a result of this reticence, at the time when my father intimated to me his expectations for my future, money did not have any mysterious attraction for me. The profession which my father had chosen for me seemed to me not unlike any other; and I scarcely suspected that it was that one which the immense majority of men would most gladly embrace. Whatever might be in my boyhood my personal opinion of my destined profession, I never had a chance to practise it, for my father's fortune began to fade away in the very year when I came of age, and it

vanished finally a decade before my father died, leaving for the family needs only the far more modest inheritance of my mother.

Altho our change of circumstances had many displeasing accompaniments, and altho it forced me to face the world for myself, in a fashion that I had never foreseen, I believe I can honestly say that I have never unduly bewailed the loss of the wealth I was to have inherited. It was with ultimate equanimity that I relinquished any hope of entering the profession for which I had been trained. And of late I have found myself wondering at times whether I should have been any happier or any richer in the things that are worth while had I come into the fortune which had once been my father's. At last I have become more and more inclined to the conclusion that, on the whole, I have been better off without it. It is true that I might have administered it well and that I might have risen to place and power in politics; but it is even more probable that I might not have been able to withstand the insidious temptations and the disintegrating accompaniments of wealth not earned by my own efforts.

I have also wondered frequently whether it was an advantage or a disadvantage for me to have spent my boyhood in luxurious surroundings, when the wealth that supplied them was to shrivel away just as I was about to appreciate its possibilities. To have had in abundance and then not to have, this is a deprivation of accustomed things; and for years it made itself felt in a constant sense of loss. Many a poor boy has had a hard struggle in his

bare youth, battling almost for life itself, and has toiled unceasingly, striving upward until he has won a large fortune for his old age; and I have often asked myself whether his experience is more satisfactory on the whole than mine. I had at least the privilege of early initiation, of association from my youth up with the well-bred, of living in a home of graceful refinement, of profiting by foreign travel in childhood and boyhood, of meeting interesting people, authors and artists, of having every opportunity for surveying the world in its pleasantest aspects. And perhaps I owe to this some part, at least, of my incurable cheerfulness, of my tolerant good humor, and of my indurated optimism.

These things have each of them their own value; and taken together they may be called a fair compensation for other things which I have had to surrender. But no one of them, nor all of them together, can I deem as important as another benefit for which I am more and more grateful as the years go by. Wealth, merely as wealth, as money heaped up, as a source of luxury and of self-indulgence, has never had for me any glamor. Of course, it would be inept not to conceive of money as a good thing to have; but it never appeared to me as other than one of the many good things that fate may or may not have bestowed upon any one of us. A great fortune, or what was so accounted half a century ago, had been a possession of mine, at least in immediate expectation; and all unthinking I had enjoyed the benefit of it. In consequence, I have never been awed by wealth, or even greatly im-



pressed by it, having no temptation to worship it inordinately, even if I retain a full understanding of its value as a lubricant for the machinery of life.

### III

A few years ago, half-a-dozen or half-a-score, up in the sunny smoking-room only recently built on the roof of the Athenæum in London, and on a lovely summer afternoon, I had an illuminating conversation that comes back to me now as I write. That keen explorer of nature and art and life, Sir Martin Conway, in the course of our wandering talk about men and things, was unexpectedly moved to develop what struck me at first as only a clever but abhorrent paradox, until his clear exposition at last almost carried conviction. His startling contention was that the ultimate strength of Great Britain, her march forward in peace and in war, her unparalleled ability to administer a stupendous empire, her unexampled power of ruling alien dependencies, in fact, all her acknowledged superiorities, were the direct result of a single principle, a principle which the British alone among their European rivals had preserved, and which we Americans had never allowed to be established. This was the principle of primogeniture, by which the great estates passed entire to the eldest son, cutting off the younger sons to fend for themselves.

As Conway proceeded to expound this unacceptable theory, I slowly realized the force of the French wit's assertion that "a paradox is often only a truth

serving its apprenticeship.” He began by admitting the apparent unfairness of refusing their equal share to the younger sons, but he maintained that this unfairness was but apparent, since it deprived them only of money while giving them what was far better than money. He insisted that they actually had the best of it, since what is really best for any man is not that he should have his path made smooth for him by the enervating inheritance of unearned wealth, but that he should receive the rich training which would fit him most adequately for making his own way in the world when he is finally cast on his own resources; that he should know from the first the necessity he will be under to fend for himself, so that he will at the start have every incentive to profit by his ample educational opportunities; and then finally that he should be forced “to fight for his own hand,” assured in advance of the influential support of the head of the family, the elder son who is the only one of the lot to be laden with the heavy responsibility of keeping up appearances, and who is the only one to be cursed with unearned wealth.

Conway pointed out that this assured to the younger sons the “career open to the talents,” which the French Revolution proclaimed, open in England not to all the talents as the French had demanded, but only to a strictly selected group, limited to the class which had been proved to possess a hereditary gift for leadership. My brilliant friend had no difficulty in adducing a host of illustrations, including, of course, the most obvious and

the most illustrious — Wellington. As he developed his paradox it began slowly to take on the attributes of an unrecognized truth, incomplete in its application, no doubt, but demanding consideration. And I could not refrain from silently making a personal application to myself. I was not a younger son; in fact, I was an only son; yet I had had every educational opportunity, even if I had not improved these as amply as the younger sons in England who had gone forth to win fame and fortune for themselves. That I had not profited as wisely or as fully as I might by my earlier advantages, was perhaps because I had not the warning they received almost in the cradle that the luxury which surrounded and supported them, and supplied the preparation for self-advancement was never to be theirs.

#### IV

Altho I do not now feel any keen disappointment at my failure to come into the fortune my father hoped to bequeath to me, and altho I believe myself to be amply reconciled to the state of life in which I find myself to-day, I am forced to confess to a disappointment of a totally different kind, due to my failure to attain what was a very early object of ambition. In spite of my placid expectation of wealth, what I most vigorously desired in my youth was not the leisure and the luxury, or even the position in public life wherein my father placed me in his forecasting aspirations. Indeed, I doubt

if I ever adequately appreciated the possibilities of the career planned for me, or if that career really appealed to me, forever dangling itself before me as a prize to be won by hard labor. To politics I felt little attraction, even when I chanced to give it a thought; but I did not often let my mind play with it, since public life seemed to me far in the future, and in a way unreal. It had no power to excite me, ignorant as I was of its allurements.

What had the power to excite me was the theater; and its allurements were immediate and genuine. I did not want to act; I wanted to write plays for others to act. That was the goal where my wandering thoughts tended to direct themselves when I was an undergraduate and a law student. I made no effort to reconcile this wish for the practice of stage-craft with the possession of wealth; indeed, I do not believe that I ever got so far as to consider play-writing as a profession, or to weigh its pecuniary rewards; I simply wanted to write plays, for the sheer delight of writing them, without thought of fortune or fame, and without being conscious of any pent-up emotions within me demanding expression in dialog and in action. I had no surging sentiments; I did not need money; and as for winning a reputation by my work for the stage, that — to the best of my recollection — simply never entered my head. I wanted to write plays for the joy of the job itself, wholly without any ulterior consideration.

In a letter written when he was eighteen, Longfellow told his father that he most eagerly aspired

after future eminence in literature; "my whole soul burns ardently for it, and every earthly thought centers in it." I had no such soaring ambition, and none of the proud consciousness of power which must have moved Longfellow to this warm expression of his youthful hope. What I obeyed was apparently an inborn impulse, the result of my having been taken to the theater not infrequently in my childhood, and of having gone there often in my boyhood. It was before I was eighteen that I made my first attempt, as impossible and as empty as a boy's first attempts at play-writing usually are. And before I was twenty a bald and hasty adaptation of a French farce was actually produced by real actors in a real theater before a real audience. This took place in a Southwestern city, and I did not have the excruciating pleasure of being present at the ordeal by fire. The piece was given on the benefit night of the chief performer; and then it sank forever out of sight, raising no ripple on the surface of the river of oblivion.

In the forty years that followed I have written other plays, either alone or in collaboration, original and not taken from the French. At least half-a-dozen of these, some in one act only, and the others stretching out to the larger framework of three and four acts, have been exposed to the public gaze; and two or three of them have been found to possess the power of pleasing the assembled playgoers. I have never been the happy author of what may be termed a "best seller" of the stage, one of these triumphant spectacles, displayed for half a thousand

nights on Broadway, with half-a-dozen subsidiary companies exploiting it simultaneously from Portland, Maine, to Portland, Oregon, and with foreign countries still to be heard from. This prolonged pleasure has never been mine; and yet my average of success on the stage has not been unsatisfactory.

What is unsatisfactory that the sum total from which this average must be struck is not larger than it is, and that I have not oftener presented myself before the footlights, that I have not had plays produced season after season, to sink or to swim, as the winds of chance might blow. So keen is my enjoyment in the inventing, the constructing, and in the writing of a play that I can face with tranquillity the deep damnation of its taking off. I should not have complained had I had more than my fair share of failures, finding full compensation in the survivors from the wreck. The craft of play-making, with all its arduous secrets, and all its obscure processes, is to me so fascinating that I can sympathize with the remark of a fellow enthusiast of a wider experience than mine, to the effect that the next best thing to seeing a play of his succeed was to see it fail. I suppose that my sympathy with this saying evidences in me the survival of the gambling instinct, of the eagerness to throw dice with fate — for assuredly there is no aleatory excitement, short of actual warfare, so poignant as that inherent in the first performance of a new play before a metropolitan audience.

To write plays, and to keep on writing them, and to have them performed, one after another,

year after year — this was my boyhood ambition; and to my constant disappointment this ambition has been incompletely gratified. I think I can spy out the reasons for this; the foremost of them is that in spite of my love for the dramaturgic art, I never abandoned myself to it whole-heartedly — perhaps because the vocation was not so clear, the call not so loud, as I liked to believe. The drama is a most jealous mistress, and I have failed to serve her with unwavering fidelity. This is why I have been for a score of years or more engaged in expounding by word of mouth or on the printed page, the principles of the art of play-making rather than in putting them into practice for my own account.

Here is another profession for which I was carefully prepared, this time by my own act, and by years of devoted study; and this other profession I have been permitted to practise only intermittently. It would not be easy for me to decide which of my two professions, the one abandoned almost as soon as I came of age, and the other cherished unceasingly but never exclusively pursued, has had the more obvious influence upon the varied events of my life. What it is easy for me to point out is that when I was forty I was suddenly and most unexpectedly invited to enter a third profession — that of teaching — to which I had never given a thought, and for which I had made no conscious preparation.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PARENTAGE OF A NEW YORKER

#### I

“ONE cannot gather some of the best fruits of life without climbing out to the end of the slender branches of the Ego,” said Holmes in one of his essays; and I cite this as an excuse for the inevitable prevalence of the perpendicular pronoun in these rambling reminiscences. I am the seventh in descent from James Matthews, who came over to Massachusetts between 1630 and 1636, in which latter year he was living in Charlestown. In 1639, or soon thereafter, he removed to Yarmouth on Cape Cod, where he was to die in January, 1685-6, after having been selectman of the town for many years. In 1664 he was representative in the colonial legislature. A doubtful tradition recorded that he was a man of “liberal education”; and this is likely enough, as there were in the seventeenth century more college-bred men in New England in proportion to the population than there ever have been since.

Altho the proof is inadequate, it seems probable also that he was a member of the Glamorganshire family of Matthews, which had close relations with Bristol, whence so many of the earlier immigrants departed to New England. It may be noted that



the ship in which John Cabot had sailed from that port in 1497, on the voyage which resulted in the discovery of the mainland, was named either the *Matthew*, after the evangelist, or the *Matthews*, after some local patron — who may have been, so I like to fancy, a far distant ancestor of mine. There is one piece of evidence which may connect the James Matthews who came to New England before 1636 with an English family of the name. A will is preserved in Gloucester, England, dated 1650, in which Margery Matthews of Tewksbury, single woman, left forty pounds to her “kinsman, James Matthews, now beyond the seas, if he return for it.” As James, the kinsman of Margery, did not return to claim this legacy, it is quite possible that he was the James Matthews who died at Yarmouth, thirty odd years after the date of this will.

Wherever the vaguely glimpsed ascendants of James Matthews may have dwelt, his descendants clung to the sandy soil of Cape Cod for five generations. Sometimes they married the daughters of their Barnstable County neighbors, and sometimes they sought wives as far afield as Boston. On the distaff side my father could claim descent from William Brewster, the elder who led the Pilgrims on the voyage to New England, and also from Thomas Prince, twice governor of Plymouth Colony. Two other of his ascendants in the female line also demand mention here; one is Colonel John Gorham, who commanded one of the two Plymouth companies at the Narragansett fight, in December, 1675, and who died of fever while on service in King Philip's

War the year after; and the other is the elder Thomas Dexter, the original purchaser of Nahant, which he bought for a suit of clothes from an Indian (who was the first person to be hanged in the colony). Brewster and Prince, Gorham and Dexter — these are good New England names; and it is pleasant for me to know that my grandson, if he so choose, can easily establish his right of election to the Society of the Mayflower Descendants and to the Society of Colonial Wars.

Like the rest of the dwellers on the New England coast, the men of the Matthews family were some of them farmers, and some of them sailors; and on occasion they plowed both the land and the sea. There is a family tradition, told to me in my boyhood, that one of our kin, whether by blood or by marriage I do not now recall, was in command of a wooden paddle-wheel boat in the early days of steam-navigation across the Atlantic. The vessel came to grief in the ice off the Banks; and the captain, standing on the paddle-box with the first officer, saw all the passengers and all the crew safely into the boats. Then he did his duty and went down with his ship. But in the final plunge of the stricken vessel, the paddle-box was wrenched free; and by clinging to it the captain and his companion were saved, to be picked up the next day by the boats of a rescuing ship.

## II

My grandfather, born in 1779 and surviving until 1857, was named James, as had been his grandfather, the grandson of the James Matthews who was the first of our family to come to these shores. Only once did I see my grandfather, on a solitary visit to Cape Cod in my early childhood; and what my memory now yields under pressure is only a faded portrait of a kindly old man with strong features, and a blurred picture of his weather-beaten house, wherein the object that most impressed itself was a huge fly-trap, with an ingenious revolving device for luring its frequent victims into the fatal interior. I remember a long, hot ride along sandy roads under sparse pines until we came to a little camp-meeting, hidden away in the woods. I can recapture also a view of the immense cranberry-marshes, stretching out flat on both sides of the road; and I have a vision of the vast salt-vats where the sea-water was slowly evaporating under the midsummer sun.

From what my father told me at one time or another, I gather that my grandfather was a forehanded man, "capable" as the New Englander terms it, and of a type not uncommon in the little towns a century ago — a man who in a larger community would have had a fuller incentive to put forth all his power. From the fact that he was regularly chosen moderator of town-meeting, I judge that he had the respect of his fellow townsmen; and from

another fact I infer that he was not always tolerant of the weaknesses of his neighbors. He managed the town-meetings so firmly and he cut short prolix discussion so ruthlessly that he was thought by some to be a little too arbitrary; and as a result the discontented organized secretly, and were able to elect another moderator, more likely to be lenient to their prolixity. But that summer town-meeting lasted three days, and in haying-time, too; so that the next year James Matthews became moderator again without any opposition.

One other peculiarity of his I cannot omit, if only because of the inverted moral it carries. My grandfather had the old Cape Cod habit, perhaps brought home from his seafaring days, of indulging every evening in a goblet of Medford rum, properly diluted with water; and it was the cherished right of his three sons, when they were in their teens, to claim each in his turn the solitary lump of sugar that was left at the bottom of the glass. At the risk of sadly disappointing the natural expectation of any teetotallers who may chance to read these records, I am bound to state that this early taste of liquor at a most susceptible age did not later lead any one of his sons to delight in strong drink. I can testify that my father, at least, was one of the most abstemious men I have ever known; and even in his old age, when he was ordered to take stimulants, his doses were infrequent and almost infinitesimal.

## III

In Yarmouth in 1814 my father, Edward Matthews, was born; and he was the first of our stock to abandon Cape Cod. He did a man's work on his father's farm long before he was sixteen; long before he was twenty he moved to Boston in search of a larger field for his untiring energy. A few years later he went West; and he used to tell me that he supposed he was one of the first white men to go under the Falls of St. Anthony. At St. Louis and New Orleans, up and down the Mississippi, and along its chief tributaries, he pushed his fortune, shrewdly foreseeing the movement of prices. He was an operator in cotton, in breadstuffs, and in provisions, never hesitating to extend his purchases beyond the daring of his rivals, but never "speculating," as he always insisted to me. That is to say, he was never tempted into that taking of chances which is purely gambling, ready as he always was to run any risk, when his imaginative insight into world-politics and into trade-conditions revealed to him that the hour had come when courage would reap its full reward.

More often than not his vision was sound, but it was not infallible; and while he generally made money, now and again he lost. Altho he liked to have ample means to spend on his family and on others, he did not greatly care for money itself, his real pleasure arising rather from the making of it, from beholding the tangible result of his bold

enterprise. He was a true descendant of the merchant adventurers of Tudor England; and there was an Elizabethan spaciousness in his outlook upon opportunity. The son of one of his earliest friends declared that his grandiose audacity in his gigantic operations made him appear "a kind of a hero of commerce, especially when one remembers the time when these were made — before any large fortunes had been accumulated, before Wall Street was, before inflation had popularized speculation."

When he sat to Bonnat in Paris a few years before his death, in 1887, he was weakened by patiently endured pain; and perhaps for this reason the portrait has a spiritual quality not common in the paintings of this artist. None the less has it all his customary vigor and directness. While at work upon it, Bonnat remarked to my sister that her father had striking and significant features, so that he was eminently paintable: "In fact, he has a head like those that Titian used to paint." The most obvious explanation of this shrewd saying may be found in the fact that Titian was wont to portray the patricians of Venice, a city whose merchants were princes, and whose princes were merchants. Never at any time could my father be mistaken for other than an American, yet he conformed to the type of merchant endowed with a far-reaching imagination as this existed in Italy.

On Cape Cod at the end of the second decade of the nineteenth century, even the most ambitious of boys had scant schooling; and my father could profit only by a few short winter terms. It was

always a wonder to me how he had acquired his knowledge of books. Pope and Byron were early favorites, from whom he used to quote occasionally. Of the later writers, he was attracted to Thackeray and to Taine. He had an instinctive liking for the best, and an almost intuitive power for its perception — accompanied naturally enough by a keen dislike for the second-rate. It was rather by travel than by reading that he cultivated his taste for beauty; and he came in time to have a singular delicacy of appreciation in judging enamels and laces and paintings. He was, in short, one of those very unusual men whose natural gifts are so generous that they can attain to culture without the customary foundation of a liberal education.

Probably because he did not resolutely set himself to the task he never acquired any foreign language, not even French; yet he had an unusual ability to make himself understood in whatever country he might chance to be. Indeed, he used to say that he had travelled very comfortably all over Europe, or at least in France and Italy and Germany, with the aid of the single word "*Combien?*" — an apt illustration of the truth of the American saying that "money talks."

But my father understood the universal language of art; and he was in advance of his time in his enjoyment of Japanese bronzes, for example, and of the exquisite work of the contemporary French goldsmiths who had resuscitated and rivalled the craftsmanship of Benvenuto Cellini. He had an almost feminine delicacy of taste, and he had it in

a degree rarely achieved by any woman, since it is noteworthy that altho men are far less likely to be dowered with this gift than women, when they do possess it they have it more abundantly and more certainly. In Italy in 1867 my father was keenly interested in Castellani's reproduction of Etruscan ornaments; and it was to him that the artist-antiquary once made the suggestive remark that he had in his shops not a few workmen who could improve on the handicraft of Cellini, altho not one of them could be counted on to make an original design of any vital value. Into his purchases of these objects of art and also of paintings, my father carried all the sagacity which had characterized his money-making. When he finally lost his fortune, after the panic of 1873, he had to dispose of most of the treasures collected during the preceding decade; and he found some slight consolation for this parting from things he had lovingly gathered in the fact that he was able to sell them for more than they had cost him.

When the Civil War broke out my father was too broken in health to volunteer, and he had to content himself with sending a substitute. As a New Englander who had lived long in New Orleans, he had no illusions as to the early end of the struggle. He knew the temper of the North and of the South; and he foresaw that the strife would be long-protracted. Therefore he began at once to buy cotton, and he persevered in this enterprise all thru the four years of incessant fighting. With the aid of an unnaturalized British subject whom he sup-



plied with funds, and who kept for the most part within the steadily shrinking Confederate lines, he managed to get out many thousand bales that might otherwise have been destroyed. His earliest purchases cost him only seven or eight cents a pound; and his latest sales realized nearly two dollars a pound. His judgment as to the exact moment when it was wise to withdraw from an operation was not always as sound as his instinct as to the minute when this operation should begin; but in the Civil War he perceived when the end was at hand; and he withdrew from the cotton market long before it broke.

One incident of this series of operations in cotton during the war deserves to be dwelt on, as illustrative of the disfavor with which the Union cause was regarded in England, and more particularly in Liverpool, which had been hard hit by the interruption of trade relations. When the *Trent* affair occurred, my father had more than one cargo of cotton on the Atlantic on its way to the Lancashire spinners who were eagerly awaiting it; and in the uncertainty as to the outcome of the strained relations between Great Britain and the United States, he thought it wise to take the first steamer to England, that he might defend his property in person. He spent several lonely and wearisome weeks of waiting at the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool, a port then apparently populated solely by Southern sympathizers. As a result of this intensity of feeling my father was cut in the street by men who had sat at his table in New Orleans only a few years

before. And on more than one occasion certain of these men went into the coffee-room of the Adelphi while my father was taking a solitary meal, and, dividing into two groups, they sat themselves down at tables right and left of him, so that they might loudly talk across, violently expressing their dislike for all Yankees.

My father had early become a firm believer in the future of New York. He had moved here before the war, and had bought a house. Before the effects of the inflation which resulted from the superabundant issue of the greenbacks needed to carry on the gigantic struggle had manifested themselves by a rise in prices, he began to invest the profits of his cotton operations in real estate in the immediate vicinity of the Stock Exchange. He altered a host of old houses into commodious offices to shelter the feverish speculators of the Gold Room, and of the later petroleum boom. The Empire Building, at the corner of Broadway and Rector Street, was the first office edifice to be equipped with an elevator. He was as far-sighted and as courageous in his real-estate purchases in New York as he had been in his earlier operations in other parts of the country. In 1873 his rent-roll was more than half a million dollars. Unfortunately he had made the error of heavily mortgaging these profitable properties, which were rising in value year by year, in order to obtain control of an uncompleted railroad in North Carolina. And it was not long after the panic that he found himself forced to part with all his deeply encumbered

real estate in the vain hope of saving his preponderant interest in an unprofitable road.

#### IV

It was while he was residing in the South that my father met my mother, Virginia Brander, the second daughter of James S. Brander. This maternal grandfather of mine had been born in 1792 near Elgin, in the northwestern part of Scotland; and he arrived in the United States at the end of the first decade of the last century. Altho, like my father in New England, my grandfather could have had in Scotland little opportunity for schooling, he had, like my father again, the sturdy resolution and the unflagging energy by which the Scots and the New Englanders of a century ago were nerved to overcome the disadvantages of an unduly shortened education. When I knew him in the later years of his life, he was a man of combined dignity and charm, kindly and shrewd, holding his own easily in any society in which he might be placed. In different towns of the United States, at first in Petersburg, then in New York, and later in New Orleans, he had early proved that he had a full share of the business acumen characteristic of the hardy Scots who came to this country to push their fortunes. He revealed also his possession of the solidity of character which wins the respect even of rivals in trade, and which is ever more important than the faculty of making money.

He was the owner of the earliest line of packets

to sail for Europe from any of our ports south of Mason and Dixon's line. His mercantile activity stretched from the War of 1812 to the Civil War, just before the outbreak of which he retired from business with what was then considered a comfortable fortune. I have reason to believe that I was his favorite grandchild; and when I was only a little boy, scarcely out of the nursery, he called after me a ship he was having built. He even ordered that the gilded figurehead of this vessel should be carved in my effigy. As I never saw the *Young Brander* I cannot testify to the accuracy of the resplendent image. Nor do I know into whose hands the ship passed after my grandfather parted with it; but I believe that its career was untimely cut off, and that it was one of the ships captured and sunk by the *Alabama* during her bloodless cruises.

It was while he was living in Petersburg that my grandfather married my grandmother, Harriet McGraw of Chesterfield County, Virginia. There were three sons of this marriage and two daughters, my mother being the youngest of the five children. Like many another Scot who had become an American by choice, my grandfather was loyal both to his native land and to his adopted country; and as a testimony of this double devotion he bestowed the name of "Caledonia" upon his elder daughter, and he was about to inflict that of "Columbia" upon the younger, when he relented in favor of "Virginia" — a recognition of States' rights for which my mother was ever after profoundly grateful.

In the privacy of the domestic circle the harsh and forbidding name of the elder sister was speedily softened, and I recall her as "Aunt Doney." She married an Englishman, and when as a bride she entered the home of her husband's parents near Liverpool, his aged nurse, who had hidden behind the door to see what manner of woman this American might be whom the son of the house had taken to wife, broke out with the astonished cry: "Why, she's white!" To this day it is impossible even to guess what color the old servant expected an American bride to be, whether red or black. My aunt's marriage, it may be noted, had taken place in the years between 1840 and 1850, and therefore after the publication of the earliest 'Leatherstocking Tales,' and before the publication of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.'

With a canny Scot's high regard for education, my grandfather saw to it that his daughters should have the advantages denied to him. My mother had been born in 1827, and her sister was only a year older. By good fortune they were early sent to Miss McClenahan's school in New York. We are carelessly inclined to believe that our educational practices are far more advanced now in the first quarter of the twentieth century than they could have been in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, and I confess that it is improbable that there were in the United States in 1840 many schools for girls so admirably conducted as that to which my mother and my aunt owed their unusual training. Miss McClenahan's methods may have

been old-fashioned if judged by up-to-date standards; but she did somehow manage to train the girls committed to her charge, and to train them with conscientious thoroughness.

As a result of this schooling, I recall my mother as the best-educated woman I have ever known. She knew what she knew with absolute certainty; and she was modestly aware of the boundaries of her knowledge. Her memory was marvellously comprehensive and accurate; apparently she never forgot anything that was worth remembering. And her education had not stopped with the end of her school-days, when she was only sixteen. Her ambition had been widely awakened, and she was incessant in improving herself almost as long as she lived, taking an unflagging interest in the progress of the world, even when she had long passed three-score years and ten.

At Miss McClenahan's school my mother was not only solidly grounded in the essentials of education, she had also an ample opportunity to acquire the accomplishments, music and foreign languages — the accomplishments which are only too often accepted as feminine substitutes for the essentials. Her French was fluent and accurate; and her Italian teacher was that Lorenzo da Ponte who had in his youth supplied the libretto for Mozart's 'Don Giovanni.' In history, and also I think in English, the chief instructor for the older girls was John Bigelow; and my mother used to tell us how handsome he was as a young man, and how distinguished his manner — and also how the schoolgirls all admired

him, and how some of them sighed for him in secret.

I do not wish to suggest that my mother was a woman of unusual intellectual power. She was quick-witted and clear-minded, a good talker and an excellent listener. She was not in the least austere in her outlook on life, and on occasion, in the privacy of the family circle, she could be a most amusing mimic. She was the ultimate embodiment of feminine refinement and of womanly delicacy, and in consequence of this she was a little too shrinking, or perhaps it would be juster to say, a little too lacking in any forthputting energy, ever to seize a commanding position in society. Altho she was hospitable, she never took the first step toward new friendships, and she was disinclined ever to pay a first call. A most gracious and winning hostess in her own home, she had, whenever she went without its walls, what may fairly be termed a grand manner, native to her and not tainted by any trace of affectation. Indeed, affectation or pretense of any kind was wholly foreign to her nature. Her portrait was painted by Cabanel when she was already elderly, but as is the custom of Parisian artists, he translated her into French, and presented her as a somewhat sophisticated countrywoman of his own. This is why I much prefer a simpler and earlier portrait in my possession, due to the brush of Buchanan Read (to whose pen we owe 'Sheridan's Ride') — a portrait which bestows on her the sloping shoulders fashionable in the fifties, but which also captures not a little of her gracious dignity.

## V

We none of us order our lives to best advantage, and as we look back at our careers we cannot but blush at the blunders we have committed. Yet as I turn my gaze to the past, and as I bring before my eyes again the figures most familiar to me in my childhood, it seems to me that in one respect at least I made no mistake. I did not err in what is perhaps the most momentous act of life, the most far-reaching in its inevitable and inexorable consequences — in the choice of my parents and of my grandparents. However much I may be dissatisfied with myself, with them at least I am completely contented.



## CHAPTER III

### EARLY SCHOOL-DAYS

#### I

A YEAR or two earlier than 1850 my father, in the course of his operations up and down the Mississippi, found himself in New Orleans, and there made the acquaintance of my mother, my grandfather Brander having recently removed from New York. For two or three years my father courted my mother, in New Orleans in the winter, and in the summer at the White Sulphur Springs. They were married in the early spring of 1851, and for their wedding trip they went on their first voyage to Europe. In the fall they took a house in New Orleans, and there I was born on the 21st of February, 1852. I was christened James Brander, after my mother's father — James being also the name of my father's father. As it happened I was always called Brander in the family and never James; and thus it was that when I became a man of letters and felt the need of a trademark to warrant my literary wares, I dropped out of my signature the James which had come to me from both my grandfathers.

Of my infancy in New Orleans I can recapture only a blurred impression of a single walk along a broad street; I was holding tight to my grand-

father's hand, and we passed in front of a vacant lot shut in by a board fence, decorated with most terrifying pictures — identifiable now as probably the posters of some sensational melodrama of the day. Of our brief semiannual visits to Chicago, where we paused every spring on our way North, and every fall on our return to the South, I can recall only the clear memory of sidewalks on two different levels, so that we were frequently forced to go up or to go down half-a-dozen steps, more or less of a feat for my infant legs; and I know now that this must have been in the year when Chicago was bravely and boldly raising itself above the muddy shore of the lake. And of the Mississippi steamboats that took us up and down the river from a point opposite Chicago, I find I can evoke no vision at all, altho my mother told me more than once that on one trip a fellow-passenger, a lady with obstreperous children of her own, was so impressed by my exemplary behavior that she stopped me to ask what made me such a good boy — to which I promptly made answer that it was because when I was naughty "my mother spanked me with her slipper and my nurse with her india-rubber shoe." This explanation, so my mother commented as she told the tale, might be a statement of the exact fact, but it was false in as far as it might suggest that these dire punishments were frequently inflicted.

We used to pass thru Chicago on our way from New York to New Orleans, and from New Orleans to New York, because there was in the early fifties

no satisfactory railroad connection thru the Southern States. The condition of travelling had been even more inconvenient when my mother was a girl at school in New York, for then the most comfortable route was to take a Hudson River steamboat up to Albany, where they transferred to one of the commodious passenger-packets on the Erie Canal, which conveyed them in course of time to Buffalo, where they got on board a lake-steamer bound to Chicago, whence a stage-coach carried them to the nearest town on the Mississippi, to catch the first steamboat stopping there on its long trip down to New Orleans.

We did not always go so far down the river as New Orleans, for we spent one winter at St. Louis. Here again I can call back only a single picture, which informs me now that it must have imprinted itself on my infant retina during the first year of the siege of Sebastopol, since what I see in the glass of memory is a gas-lit room wherein a negro boy enters bearing the evening paper, which my mother takes up at once, only to sigh over "the sufferings of the poor fellows in the trenches."

## II

We did not always go South, for in 1857 we went abroad for a European visit, which lasted more than a year. In those remote days the southern countries of Europe were scarcely better provided with railroads than the southern part of the United States; and the posting system still survived. So

my father bought a comfortable travelling-carriage in Paris, in which we were to journey as far south as Naples. This carriage had a rumble behind, for the courier and for my nurse, the worthy English-woman who had corrected me with her india-rubber shoe, and who was always in a state of exasperated hostility toward her Italian travelling-companion, the highly efficient courier. Fitted to the top of the carriage were three large shallow boxes, which contained our outfits, and which were unstrapped and taken to our rooms when we stopped for the night.

I believe that we went by rail to Basle, taking the carriage with us; and that once in Switzerland we had to depend for conveyance on our own vehicle, the successive post-houses, a few miles apart, supplying us regularly with four horses, ridden by two postilions. Thus it was that my father and my mother first saw Switzerland, and in a far more satisfactory fashion than is possible to-day, when the railroads rush us to our destination by the shortest line, whirling us over valleys and whisking us thru mountains. Our carriage wound up and down the lovely valleys at a leisurely gait, no more rapid in the descent than in the ascent, since our speed in going down was checked not only by the brake, but also by wooden shoes slipped under the rear wheels.

I regret to have to confess that our zigzag wandering thru the length and the breadth of Switzerland in the summer of 1857 did not photograph itself on my memory; and that the only negative I can

now develop is the landscape after we had come down into Italy on the way to Milan. This is a landscape with figures, the flat plain, stretching away indefinitely, the straight road lined on both sides with tall, thin, Lombardy poplars, the carriage rolling smoothly behind the four horses, the rising and falling backs of the two gaily caparisoned postilions — and a small boy of five kneeling on the front seat, facing forward, and now and again calling out, “Avanti, postiglione!” — not that he was in any hurry, but rather for the childish pleasure of giving orders in a foreign tongue.

By a linguistic misunderstanding related to me in after years I can fix the fact that we stayed a night in Ferrara. When our belongings had been borne up to our apartment, the head-waiter appeared to take orders for our dinner. My mother asked him if it would not be possible for us to have partridges. Owing either to some slip in her use of the tongue she had learned from Da Ponte, or to the barrier interposed by the harsh local dialect, this simple question failed to be correctly understood. At least, this is what my mother could not but infer when the head-waiter smiled complacently and drew himself up and answered: “No, Signora; by the grace of God I was born in Ferrara!” And my mother was never able to guess how her inquiry had been transmogrified into a question to which this was a proper answer.

From Ferrara we journeyed in time to Florence; and there my father ordered from Fedi, the sculptor, whose ‘Rape of Polyxena’ had just been placed in

the Loggia dei Lanzi, a statue of me — or at least, a statue of a boy of my years, riding on a dolphin, and possessing a head for which I posed, and which reveals the young Arion as having his hair artfully arranged with a central roll, then known as a “roach.”

We went on to Rome, and while we were there my father and mother were presented to the Pope, Pius IX; and they took me with them. All that I can now recall of this visit to the Vatican is our walking down what seemed to me then a very long gallery, at the far end of which there stood a motionless figure in white — a figure which my mother, even then a little short-sighted, took at first for a statue, but which we soon recognized as that of the sovereign pontiff himself. The Pope was very gracious to the little Protestant boy of five who had come from across the Atlantic, and who looked up at him with wonder; and he said that I was very young to have travelled so far. Then he bestowed his blessing upon all three of us; and our audience was over.

On a later visit to Rome I was told about the characteristically clever formula which Pius IX had invented to make conversation with the many strangers from all parts of the world whom he permitted to be presented to him. When he found the person with whom he was talking a little at a loss for a topic, he used to ask if his visitor had been long in Rome. If the answer was, “A few weeks only,” the Pope returned: “Then I suppose you have seen nearly everything.” If he were told

that the stranger had spent a winter in the Holy City, he rejoined: "Then I suppose you are beginning to find your way around?" And if the visitor explained that he had been in Rome often before, or that he had spent a year or more there, the Pope would smile understandingly and respond: "Then I suppose you have already discovered that nobody can ever *know* Rome!"

In the earlier months of 1858 there were many American families in Rome, some of them old acquaintances of my parents; and I recall that I was taken with them once when they went to pay a visit to Governor and Mrs. Hamilton Fish. Under the eyes of our elders I had a shy conversation with two of the sons of Mr. Fish, Hamilton and Stuyvesant, only a little older than I, not then foreseeing that we three would next meet as room-mates in the same boarding-school, and that the younger of them would be my classmate in Columbia College, and the elder my classmate in the law school.

There were so many visitors to Rome that winter that there was difficulty in securing post-horses when the gay season ceased suddenly at the beginning of Lent. My father arranged with Governor Fish, who was also going down to Naples, that the respective departures of the two families should be so timed that their carriage would go on in advance of ours, and thus their horses after an interval of rest would be available for our carriage. Our delayed departure had one advantage — that we were able to linger late enough on the evening

of Shrove Tuesday to let us see the traditional illumination of tapers, *moccoletti*, all along the Corso; but it had the disadvantage that we had to journey thru the darkness. Night-travel in the Roman territory was then believed to be unhealthy because of the malaria. And in the Neapolitan territory even day-travel was none too safe, because of brigandage. My father had to forego the trip to Pæstum, in consequence of the warnings he received in regard to the insecurity of the roads and the danger of being held for ransom — a danger which he might have risked for himself but to which he was naturally unwilling to expose his young wife.

### III

We returned to the United States for the next winter, which we spent at the New York Hotel on the corner of Broadway and Waverly Place, then perhaps the hotel where the pleasantest people were likely to be found; especially was it a gathering-place for Southerners. I think it likely that my father was attracted to it because his old friend, Isaac Sherman, was then staying there; and I recall Mr. Sherman's daughter, a pretty girl with her long hair hanging down in pigtails — a daughter now long resident in England, but still remembered in New York as the giver of the widely discussed Bradley-Martin ball. I can replevin from out of the past only two things associated with that winter — the vision of the comet, to be seen night after



night, and peered at by me always from the same window of the long corridor thru which I was being led away to bed; and second the lively picture of Broadway after an unusually heavy snow-storm, when it was thronged with sleighs of all sorts and sizes, dominated by the huge open omnibuses on runners drawn by four horses and made comfortable by many buffalo-ropes and by abundant straw thick about the feet of the passengers.

The New York Hotel was then kept by a Mr. Cranston (who afterward bought Cozzen's hotel on the Hudson, a little below West Point, and changed its name to his own). While we were residing in his hotel that winter of 1858-9, he was the victim of a murderous assault from the effects of which he did not recover for months. A man had brought his family to the hotel; and the landlord found out that one of the children was down with some contagious disease. To protect the other guests of his house, Cranston compelled the removal of this sick child to the hospital. I am under the impression that this removal may have taken place while the sick child's father was absent; but at any rate it so enraged him that he came into the dining-room of the hotel, where the landlord was sitting at dinner, and lifting up the champagne bottle which stood in a bucket of ice beside the chair, he smashed it over Cranston's head.

In the quarter of a century since my father had escaped from Cape Cod he had never settled himself for long in any one place, roving from North to South, and from East to West as he heard the

summons of opportunity. My mother had been born in Petersburg, and she had gone with her father when he removed from Virginia to New York, and from New York to New Orleans; but she felt herself most at home in New York, where she had spent part of her girlhood, and where she had been at school. When she had first seen New York it was still a sprawling little town, cluttering only the toe of Manhattan Island; for a year or two my grandfather had resided on the Battery, then a center of fashion; and one summer the family went out of town to Niblo's Garden — which was on the corner of Broadway and Prince Street, and which was later to become the site of a long-famous theater. Since my mother's childhood the city had been steadily spreading upward and outward; and it was more than a mile to the north of Niblo's Garden that my father found a house to his taste, a house built by an architect for his own occupancy. My father had decided to settle down permanently in New York, and to make it the home of his family. So it was that after infant wanderings in the South and in the Middle West and in Europe, I became a New Yorker when I was seven years old.

The house which my father purchased in 1859 to present to my mother was a spacious and commodious dwelling on the east side of Fifth Avenue between Seventeenth and Eighteenth Streets, in what was then the most attractive part of that most famous of residence thorofares, a part now wholly unattractive, alas! shorn of its splendors and abandoned to huge sweat-shops, whose outlandish work-

ers take their nooning on its impassable sidewalks. When we moved into 101 Fifth Avenue there was not a shop of any kind anywhere up and down the length of the stately street. So hostile was the sentiment of the dwellers on the avenue toward the invasion of trade that it must have taken desperate courage for the first shopkeeper to intrude into the consecrated region, and all the more extraordinary is it therefore, that the breach should have been made by a member of a calling so timorous that it is traditionally credited with only the ninth part of a soul. Yet less than half-a-dozen years after we had settled down in our new home George Arnold rimed a wail of lament that the avenue was

          falling from grace  
          at a terrible pace.  
I hear, when I promenade there,  
Strange voices of grief in the air;  
    And I fancy I see,  
    The sad sisters three,  
With their black trailing dresses  
And dishevelled tresses  
    Go, solemn and slow,  
    To and fro,  
In their woe,  
    Sighing,  
    And crying,  
Eheu! Eheu! Eheu!  
There's a tailor in Fifth Avenue!

The name of this first daring invader is now lost in the dark abyss of Time; but another half-a-dozen years later, when I was a sophomore at Columbia

College, there burgeoned forth on the corner below us a gilded sign boldly proclaiming the opening of a shop by "G. D. Happy, Tailor" — an offensive proclamation which evoked from my classmate, Stuyvesant Fish, the remark that if this tailor met with failure, he would not be so G— d— happy.

#### IV

Even in 1860, when we took possession of our new home, the residences on Fifth Avenue had pushed themselves only so far up-town as the crest of Murray Hill; and the mile or more that stretched up to the still incomplete Central Park was but sparsely built on. Union Square and Madison Square (which had only recently become celebrated as the abode of Miss Flora McFlimsey) were all girt about by brown-stone, high-stoop residences of an unimaginative monotony; there was also a corresponding settlement of the older New York families as far east as Stuyvesant Square. On the north side of Union Square was the spacious residence of Mrs. Parish (soon to serve as the first house of the Union League Club); and there I was taken to gaze wonderingly at the very elaborate model, ten or fifteen feet long, of a plan for Central Park, which Mrs. Parish had submitted and which had been rejected in favor of that prepared by Frederick Law Olmstead.

As I try to sort out the disappointing packages in the lucky bag of reminiscences accumulated by the not very observant small boy of eight that I was in those far-off years, I discover that the white-marble

Fifth Avenue Hotel had just been opened, and that it was considered to be truly worthy of the Empire City, more especially since it was equipped with a passenger-elevator that rose with slow and solemn dignity, on a solid iron shaft thrust up out of a deep hole in the ground. And I believe that my mother once told me that I had seen Abraham Lincoln drive past the New York Hotel on his flying visit to the city to deliver the address at Cooper Union which made possible his renomination for the presidency. I know that my father voted for Bell and Everett; and I think I can recall his doubts about Lincoln as an uncouth and untried backwoodsman, wholly unfitted to be President at that climax of political tension.

What I do remember distinctly was my being allowed to sit up far beyond my usual hour to see the torchlight procession of Lincoln's supporters, the glittering parade of the "wide-awakes," as they were called. And with equal distinctness I remember that a few weeks later — altho it may have been a few weeks earlier — I was permitted to behold a second nocturnal spectacle, the parade of the about-to-be-abolished Volunteer Fire Department, which took place in honor of the Prince of Wales. My childish fancy was greatly taken by a huge stuffed tiger which adorned the top of "Big Six"; and I know now that the man who was then foreman of "Big Six" was William M. Tweed, afterward to win a world-wide infamy as the chief of the Tammany ring, which robbed the city of many millions.

I had attended the class for little boys at a girl's school kept by two friends of my mother's, the Misses Sedgwick; and in the fall of 1860 I was sent for the first time to a boy's school. This was kept by Mr. George C. Anthon, a nephew of Professor Charles Anthon of Columbia College; it was distant only a single block from our house, being held in a dwelling (still standing as I pass these pages in 1917) on the southeast corner of Broadway and Eighteenth Street. It was a block below the Goelet house, with its high iron railing, thru which Henry James used to peer a few years earlier when he was a small boy, and which even then sheltered the Peacock and the Cow that Sidney Rosenfeld was to celebrate in lively rimes just before this last vestige of rusticity disappeared to give place to a business building. Mr. Anthon's school had for me the further advantage of being exactly opposite the best toy-store in New York, a dark but most alluring repository of varied joys kept by a Frenchman named Phillipoteaux.

Perhaps because I was an only son of indulgent parents I was unduly self-assertive and opinionated, not to say forthputting. Those were the days of the Heenan and Sayers prize-fight; and most Americans loyally believed that the Benecia Boy had been cheated out of his well-won victory by the bad faith of the British onlookers, who saw the battle going against their favorite. I do not record it as a testimony to my popularity, for perhaps that is just what it is not; but it is a fact nevertheless that I soon received from my schoolmates the nickname

of the Benecia Boy, probably not so much from any approved prowess as from my willingness to enter on a quarrel. It seems to me now, more than half a century later, as I look back over my more mature years, that I am a mild-mannered man, not given to brawling; and therefore I am a little at a loss to account for my juvenile efflorescence of pugnacity.

Of very trifling value are my other reminiscences of the two years I spent at Mr. Anthon's school. My admiration was excited by the surprising skill of one of the teachers who had carved a block of chalk into a miniature model of the staring white Fifth Avenue Hotel. My palate was gratified by the six-inch lengths of ripe sugar-cane, from which I was privileged to suck the juice — this gratification of my palate taking place at the house of my schoolfellow Bradish Johnson, whose father owned a sugar-plantation in Louisiana. And my regret was aroused by the conflagration of the Crystal Palace, which I had been permitted to visit, and which had stood in what is now Bryant Park, behind the Public Library that has replaced the Reservoir.

## V

What I recall with a keener pleasure is the fact that I was now allowed to enter the enchanted realm of the theater — enchanting to me even before I had come under its spell, for when we were in London in 1858 my parents had gone to see Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean in their sumptuous revival of

the 'Tempest' at the Princess's Theater; and as I was then only six years old there had been no thought of taking me. But when my mother the next morning told me all about the wonders of the spectacle she had seen, I was greatly aggrieved that I had not been permitted to behold all these glories for myself. It must have been before I was eight that I was taken to Laura Keene's to see my first play with my own eyes; it was Boucicault's dramatization of the 'Heart of Midlothian,' which he called 'Jeanie Deans,' after the heroine impersonated by his wife; and to this day I can revisualize one sensational moment, when the huge doors of the Tolbooth were at last broken in by the howling mob which had stormed the prison and which swarmed all over the stage. It must have been before I was ten that I was taken to Niblo's Garden to see Edwin Forrest in 'Macbeth'; and as this was also a play of Scottish life and character, I infer that I owed both of these early joys to my mother's father. It was probably between these two North-British plays that I witnessed a performance better suited to my tender years — that of the Ravels, those ingenious and accomplished pantomimists, whose art I was then unable to appreciate, but whose adroitness I could marvel at, especially when they cut up a live man only to put the pieces together again so that he could walk off in possession of all his members. And it must have been before J. W. Wallack built his theater at the northeast corner of Broadway and 13th Street that I was allowed to go to Grizzly Adams's Bear Show, in a tent on



the lot where the new playhouse was soon to be erected.

There were other and more thrilling spectacles out in the open streets of the city when the war began with the shot on Fort Sumter:

“Rata-tat-tat!

Those were the sounds of that battle summer,  
Till the earth seemed a parchment round and flat,  
And every footfall the tap of a drummer.”

In the summer of 1860 we had spent a few weeks at Cozzen's Hotel just below West Point, and there I had stared up at the tall bulk of General Scott, and had watched with wonder the swift evolutions of Ellsworth's little company of Zouaves which had camped in the grounds of the hotel. But now in New York what I saw was not the parade drill of a single crack company, but regiment after regiment tramping day after day down the Avenue on their way to the front. They came from the north by the Hudson River road, which had a dingy station at Ninth Avenue and 29th Street, or from the east by the New Haven road, which had an even dingier station at Fourth Avenue and 27th Street (where the Madison Square Garden now stands). Early in the morning or late in the evening the drums rattled past our door and the fifes shrilled out, since all the countless thousands were hurried forward from the cars to the ferry, no matter what the hour when the several organizations might reach the city.

One regiment I recall with special distinctness,

because I saw it go and I saw it come back. To the massive music of 'John Brown's Body' it marched past us more than a thousand strong, and I was told that every man in its ranks was over six feet, stalwart loggers all of them, from the woods of Maine; this must have been early in the summer of 1861, and they must have been ninety-day men, for in the fall they returned, a scant three hundred, all that the swamps of Virginia had spared.

The departure of the Seventh in the first month of the war I long believed that I had seen with my own eyes — so believing, perhaps, because of the impression produced by Theodore Winthrop's vivacious description. But when, just fifty years later, in April, 1911, the regiment repeated its famous march of April, 1861, it started from its old armory in Third Avenue, opposite the Cooper Union; and then I discovered that I had deceived myself into supposing that it had somehow passed our house in Fifth Avenue, half a mile farther up-town. This is an instance of the danger of remembering what never happened; and I shall have another example to cite when I come to record my memories of the downfall of the empire in Paris, in September, 1870.

For four wearing and wearying years thousands of troops swung along briskly in their way to the war; and now and then a few hundreds retraced their steps toward their distant homes. But I was in New York only the first and the last years of the four, spending the two intermediate years at a boarding-school out of town.

Of my several teachers at Mr. Anthon's school,

or of the studies prescribed for me, I have no clear memory — tho I do recall one pleasing custom, that of bestowing little silver medals at the end of the school-year, every medal engraved with the name of the study in which the recipient had excelled. The diligent students might win more than one of these tokens if they were superior in diverse departments of learning. But an unbreakable tradition imposed upon Mr. Anthon the obligation of giving at least one medal to every boy, no matter how sadly he might have lacked application. Thus it was that at the end of my first year when I was only eight years old I proudly exhibited to my parents a tiny silver maltese cross which declared that I had distinguished myself in “English Grammar,” a subject certainly as little attractive to me as any other. And at the end of my second year I brought back another of these rewards of merit, inscribed “Good Conduct.” When my father came home this was displayed to him, with a certain diffidence on my part, since I was well aware that my weekly reports had not altogether justified this reward. My father looked at it rather doubtfully; and then he took from his pocket a letter that he had received that very morning from Mr. Anthon, saying that I was not profiting by his instruction as fully as I might, and that he thought, therefore, I had better be sent to a boarding-school, where there would be fewer distractions to interfere with my application to my studies.

## CHAPTER IV

### LATER SCHOOL-DAYS

#### I

WHEN I strive to decipher and to interpret the palimpsest of my past, and as an elderly man to discover what manner of strange being I must have been as a young boy, I am regretfully compelled toward the conviction that I was none too easy to get on with, and that I must have been often rather trying to my parents, as well as to my teachers. My father may have had ample reasons of his own for sending me away to boarding-school, in addition to those supplied by Mr. Anthon. It seems to me now that if I could to-day meet myself as I then was, the association might not be altogether agreeable for the elder of us. Under my sexagenarian scrutiny the little lad of less than ten takes on the image of a spoilt child, lazy, wilful, and inconsiderate. No longer can I recognize the good boy of the Mississippi river-boat, and I ask myself whether the change for the worse may not have been the result of less frequent applications of the maternal slipper, and of the ancillary india-rubber shoe.

For me discipline was plainly "indicated," as the physicians say; and perhaps this was the motive which governed my father in sending me to a mili-

tary school at Sing Sing, founded by a former West Pointer, by the name of Churchill. More probably, however, my father chose Churchill's because it was recommended by friends whose sons had been there. I was to enter in the fall; and in the spring we went up to examine the school and to be spectators of the final parade drill of the four companies into which the fifty boys were divided. On this occasion the word of command was given by an old boy about to leave the school to enter Harvard — J. Hampden Robb, who was the son of a friend of my father's, and who afterward served as lieutenant-governor of New York, in which office he led the movement for rescuing Niagara Falls. Two sons of Governor Fish were already entered, and when I came back in the fall to begin work, I had the good fortune to share a room with Hamilton Fish, Jr., and with Stuyvesant Fish.

I was only nine when I went to Sing Sing; I was only eleven when I escaped from it; and I had a more or less unhappy two years there. The only son of indulgent parents, I was probably conceited and bumptious; and the elder boys indulged in more bullying than was beneficial for the proper correction of these defects in my character. I was the smallest boy in the school except three, and with these smaller boys my relations were ever friendly in spite of the fights into which we were forced. We were awakened every morning by the sudden roll of the drum, and we had to get up as early on Sundays as on week-days. This left a long and empty interval between breakfast and church,

an interval which invited the idleness of the older boys to the devising of mischief. One of their many inventions, kept in working order Sunday after Sunday, was to herd the smaller boys into the gymnasium and to compel them to combat. Under this practice my early pugnacity speedily departed. It was soon found that I was a little more than a match for the boy below me in stature, and therefore the two smallest boys were set on me at once, I being permitted the privilege of setting my back to the wall so that they could assault me only from the front. In spite of this privilege it was easily discovered that the pair were a little more than a match for me. I cannot help thinking that it speaks well for all four of us youngsters that these Sunday encounters did not interfere with our week-day friendliness of association.

When the warmer days of early summer came the whole school was marched down to the Hudson River, to a little bay with a sandy, shelving shore; and here we went in swimming. Now, it was an unfortunate fact that I had never before entered into open water; and altho my father had been in his youth a sturdy swimmer, he had not caused me to acquire the art. At Churchill's it was the traditional prerogative of every old boy to duck every new boy three times, and on this first occasion of my "going in swimming" I suffered severely from my inexperience. With the serenely unconscious cruelty of youth, I was seized without warning by boy after boy, and thrust under water again and again until I was almost unconscious. If I did not

then come near drowning I certainly thought so at the time. Altho I come of seafaring stock, and altho I now enjoy nothing better than to withstand the breakers at Narragansett, the impression made on me by this ducking when I was only ten has been so indelible that to this day I cannot find my head under water without a return of my unreasonable juvenile terror.

The painful submersions were repeated mercilessly at every one of our trips to the river that summer; and all the next winter the dread of what was in store for me when the time should come for the school to go down to the river oppressed me like a nightmare. And thus it was that when the late spring of 1863 arrived, and a visit to the bathing beach loomed nearer and nearer, I ran away. I had only pocket-money enough to carry me a short distance on the railroad; so I went to Cozzen's, where my grandfather was staying. He sympathized with my tale of woe; but he bade me go back to school at once. In fact, he took me across the river to Garrison, and put me on the train. But he had supplied me with money, and when the train stopped at Sing Sing I kept my seat. Two hours later I was back in my own home in New York. And when my father arrived that evening he found awaiting him a telegram from Mr. Churchill, stating that it was a rule of the school never to take back a boy who had run away.

This must have been in June, when the family had already gone up to Saratoga; and there my father took me with him. We had comfortable

rooms in the "cottage-wing" of the United States Hotel. That was the summer when the Civil War was coming to its climax, and when the cry of the American people was (in Holmes's apt phrase) for Bread and the Newspapers — only the newspapers could not satisfy the feverish craving for immediate information about all the incessant happenings, on any one of which might hang the fate of the nation. In the first month that I was at Saratoga, playing peacefully with the other boys under the ample shade of the huge trees which branched loftily over the inner grounds of the hotel, Grant took Vicksburg, and Lee was repulsed at Gettysburg. The taking of Vicksburg I must have heard about at the time, but it did not impress itself upon me, overshadowed as it was by the mighty struggle at Gettysburg, in the next State to us, and only a few hundred miles away. The strain of those three days of waiting, the terrific tension of anxiety, was felt even by the youngest of the hundreds who filled the immense hotel.

The telegraph office was directly opposite our rooms on the southern side of the U-shaped inner court of the hotel; and there was always a crowd clustered about the bulletin-board, to which the operator affixed the latest telegrams as fast as he could take them off the wires. That knot of men and women, waiting hour after hour, was now larger and now smaller, but it never melted away during all my waking hours in those three days of dreadful doubt. Sometimes a sudden cheer broke out, caught up by those who came hurrying over the lawns,



and sometimes there fell suddenly a chill silence almost as startling, after which I could see little groups talking sadly in whispers. No matter how young we were then, no one of us who lived thru that week of alternate hope and fear can ever forget it.

## II

In the fall of 1863, when I was eleven, I was sent to another day-school in New York, the Charlier Institute, which occupied two connecting dwellings on the south side of 24th Street, beyond Fourth Avenue and nearer to Lexington — both of them still standing as I revise this chapter in 1917. Élie Charlier was a Frenchman, and French was supposed to be the language of the school. In French we studied arithmetic, altho we had our Latin and Greek lessons in English. French we were expected to speak to each other even in our play-hours; and we were required to confess every day at the end of school whether or not we had broken this rule, and to declare how many words of English we had allowed ourselves. I feel sure that many of us failed to make a practice of the complete confession which should precede absolution; and that most of us kept rather the letter of the law than its spirit. When we failed to find at the tip of our tongues the needed but unfamiliar word of the foreign language, we were prone to satisfy our consciences by giving a French pronunciation and perhaps also a French termination to the more immediately available English word.

Yet, even if our speech was often only a pitifully hybrid Gallic, the constant effort to speak French was its own reward; and I must then have acquired at least the rudiments of the colloquial French of which I found myself later in possession — a colloquial French often ungrammatical enough, but generally idiomatic and almost unfailingly fluent. That some of my schoolfellows long retained our old trick of piecing out our French with approximate English vocables was revealed to me half-a-dozen years later when I was seeing the old year out and the new year in at Delmonico's with several of my Columbia classmates. Catching sight of me, a Charlier friend joined us, moving from the next table, the waiter of which he summoned with the outlandish inquiry: "Où sont ces deux drinks que j'ai ordonné?" Then he turned to me with a complacent smile and said: "I suppose you don't keep up your French now, eh?"

We used to take our lunches with us to Charlier's, and when the weather permitted we marched in columns of two under the eyes of accompanying teachers across Fourth and Madison Avenues to Madison Square, where we ate what we had brought, and where we played games afterward, or did as we pleased for half an hour. Madison Square was then girt in by iron railings, as was also Union Square; and as it was surrounded then only by residences, with few or no shops in the vicinity, we had it to ourselves as a playground. I got along well enough with my new schoolmates, altho I have an impression that I was not really popular.

The overt pugnacity of my Anthon years had been tamed by the hardness of my Churchill years; and my Charlier years were in the main peaceful. I can recall only one quarrel with a schoolfellow, fought out fairly in a secluded corner of Madison Square, half hidden by thick shrubbery. This was in the northeast corner, opposite the sunken lot, which Leonard Jerome was then utilizing as a private skating-rink, and which was soon to serve as the site of the second home of the Union League Club.

During the first winter that I spent at Charlier's the great fair was held in New York for the benefit of the Sanitary Commission, the forerunner of our modern Red Cross societies. My father, altho he had voted for Bell and Everett, and altho he had had doubts as to the fitness of Abraham Lincoln for the presidency, was intensely loyal to the Union. He was a member of the executive committee of the fair; and he gave a thousand dollars in gold. With his habitual shrewdness he saw to it that this gift should be as profitable as possible. He asked Mr. Tiffany to send it to Paris and to expend it in the articles most likely to be salable at the fair; and then he arranged — that is, I remember that he tried to do so, and I believe that he succeeded — he arranged with the Secretary of the Treasury to admit these articles free of duty, with the result that his thousand dollars in gold brought into the coffers of the Sanitary Commission between five and ten thousand dollars in currency.

The fair was held in a temporary wooden building in 14th Street, just east of Sixth Avenue, and it

had an annex on the north side of Union Square in another wooden building connected with the square, the gates of which were kept closed while the fair was open. And every night in the fountain in the square a strange spectral figure could be seen — for an extra fee; this was the illusion then recently devised in England, where it was known as “Pepper’s Ghost.” One of the attractions of the fair was a beautiful sword, with its ornate scabbard, to be presented to the Union general who should receive the most votes, costing a dollar each. There was a close contest between General Grant and General McClellan, who had a large following here in New York, especially among those who held that the war was a failure. On the last evening that the books were open in which every voter had to inscribe his name as he recorded his choice, the excitement was most intense, since the two leading candidates were almost neck and neck. That was the evening when I was taken to see the war-dances of a group of Indians who had been brought east as an added allurements; and I was allowed to spend a hoarded dollar of my pocket-money on a vote for the sword. As I signed my name the bystanders leaned forward to see who was candidate of my choice. When I wrote “Grant” in the proper column a disgusted admirer of General McClellan growled out: “What will you be when you grow up?” I was only twelve, but I had imbibed the loyal spirit of our household, and I promptly responded: “I won’t be a copperhead anyhow!”

My stay at Charlier’s lasted three years, until I

was fourteen; and then my school-days came to an end. As I look back now over my education at Anthon's and Churchill's and Charlier's I cannot recall any really stimulating teacher, any instructor who evoked in me the desire to do my best. My father had tried to choose good schools for me, and it may be that these three were among the best private schools for boys then existing in or near New York. If this was the case, there was at that time in this region no school for boys as good as the school for girls which my mother had attended a quarter of a century earlier. And if I may judge by a recent visit to a boys' high school, the teaching to be obtained in the best private schools of New York fifty years ago was far inferior to that now to be had in the public schools — inferior not only in the range of studies, but also and more especially in the quality of the teaching.

### III

In the summer of 1866 my father took his family over to Europe to stay nearly a year and a half. We made the voyage out on the *Scotia*, then the greyhound of the Atlantic, in which I was to make two later crossings, and which I was to behold for the last time, in 1900 at Gibraltar, degraded into a coal-hulk, and reminding me of a worn-out race-horse reduced to drawing an ash-cart. The *Scotia* was commanded by Captain Judkins, who was believed to be an excellent sailor, and who was known to be an exasperating shipmate because of his brus-

ness and bad manners. To one lady who asked him if it was always foggy off the Banks, he responded gruffly: "How do I know? I don't live there." To another lady who made some other inquiry of a similar kind, he snorted out a curt "Ask the cook!" To which the fair inquirer suavely returned: "I beg your pardon, but am I not speaking to the cook?"

Captain Judkins not only treated his passengers with scant courtesy, he took an attitude equally domineering with his fellow captains in command of other ships, and as a result of this arbitrary disregard of the rights of other men he came very near causing the loss of the *Scotia* on this July voyage, in 1866, as I can testify. When we were skirting the coast of Ireland and making ready to enter the harbor of Queenstown, another ship unexpectedly steamed out from behind the headlands. By the rule of the sea it was the plain duty of our boat to swing to the right and to leave sea-room between us and the rocky shore. But Captain Judkins blew his whistle sharply and went on unswervingly, heading to the left. The captain of the outgoing vessel, secure in his rights, blew his whistle to warn us and kept on his course. As a result of Captain Judkins's wilful obstinacy the two boats were for several minutes headed straight for each other. A collision seemed to be almost unavoidable. I happened to be standing in the bow, and I can hear again the shrieks of a few of the more timorous passengers on the upper deck behind me. With the stolidity of a healthy boy I did not realize the

danger, altho I could not help seeing it; yet I think I was dimly conscious of the Vision of Sudden Death. Suddenly Captain Judkins changed his mind and turned the *Scotia* to the right into her proper course, and a minute or two later the outward-bound ship passed us within two or three hundred feet.

French I had begun to speak (after a fashion) at Charlier's; and to German I was introduced on the *Scotia* the first day out. As we intended to be absent for more than a year, my father had engaged, as a tutor for me, Charles Carroll, who had been a classmate of President Eliot's at Harvard, and who was afterward professor of modern languages at New York University. Carroll was a clever man, well read, abundant and apt in anecdote, an admirable elocutionist, and unusually well equipped to impart instruction in German and in Italian, as well as in French. For some reason, he did not take his duties toward me very seriously; not that he neglected me, but rather that his responsibility for me was subordinate to his own incessant effort for mastery over rebellious foreign tongues. To his mind the whole duty of man was summed up in the replenishment of vocabulary, the conquest of idiom, and the acquisition of accent. I was present at a linguistic triumph which filled his soul with exultant joy. When we were in Lucerne, a little later that summer, he took me up the Rigi on horseback, the railroad not having yet been planned. On the ascent we fell into company with a lady and her daughter, also on horseback. She made some inquiry about

the hotel at the Kulm, and as she used German, Carroll continued the conversation in that language. Hearing him speak to me in English, she changed the talk to English. Then some French phrase, accidentally used, caused them to drop into French. Finally I heard them conversing in Italian. Then she looked at Carroll and at me. "Your young friend," she said, "is English, of course, or American. But you? What are you? I am a Swiss, daughter of a hotel-keeper, wife of a hotel-keeper, and I have to speak German and French, Italian and English. Now, I have heard you use all four of those languages and I haven't the slightest idea which is your native speech."

It was quite like Carroll not to enlighten her, and to leave her guessing as to his nativity. From him, during the six or eight months that he remained with us, I picked up the rudiments of German and of Italian; and in the course of our sojourn in Germany and in Italy during the next few months, I acquired the simple vocabulary which enabled me to serve as interpreter for my father in the curiosity-shops of Venice and of Vienna. On later visits I have discovered that I can still command a few of the most necessary vocables, enough to buy my tickets and to order a meal. Yet my personal control even over this elementary vocabulary is not indisputable, as I discovered on my last visit to Venice, when what I wanted was cold milk, *latte freddo*, and what I asked for was a warm bed, *letto caldo*.

The *Scotia* landed us at last in Liverpool; and we



spent a few days in London. Carroll took me on the regular round of sightseeing; and he also regaled me with a morning performance at the Alhambra, where I first beheld the daring and graceful performance of Léotard on the flying trapeze which he had invented. From London we went to Paris, then to Switzerland, where my father took a cure at Baden, a quaint little town nestling in an elbow of the Limmat. From Switzerland we went north into Germany, then in the throes of the Seven Weeks' War between Prussia and Austria. We were in Homburg, in Nassau, when the Prussian troops marched in and took possession. It was a peaceful, or at least an unresisted, invasion; and the sole memory it has left me is that one afternoon on the outskirts of Homburg our carriage had to be drawn on one side of the road out of the way of a regiment of Prussian soldiers, marching at ease and singing 'Upidee-Upida.'

The bloodless capture of Homburg did not in any way interfere with the amusements of that fashionable summer resort, for the gambling rooms were open every night and every afternoon. I was only fourteen, but I was tall for my years; and my father never checked me from wandering all over the *Kursaal*. I listened to the music; I inspected the polyglot crowds; and I watched with unfailing fascination the varying expressions of the gamblers who thronged about the roulette and the trente-et-quarante tables. I used to stand just on the outer fringe of the players and plan what I would do next if I were playing. Oddly enough, I was never

tempted to play; I suppose I inherited my father's distaste for "speculation," for the winning or losing of money by blind luck. I came in time to know the names of a few of the steady players, those who arrived when the tables were uncovered, and whom I left still hard at work when I went back to the hotel.

The one face I can recapture is that of a brother of the Khedive of Egypt, who came in nearly every afternoon at about the same hour, accompanied by two aides in uniform. He wore the fez above his dark, sullen, imperturbable features. A seat would be found for him at the roulette table and he would settle himself squarely, with the two aides immediately behind his chair. Then, without a word or a turn of the head, he would raise his right hand up to his shoulder, and the aide on that side would give him a black portfolio filled with thousand-franc notes. When he had staked all these notes and lost them, he would raise his left hand up to his shoulder, again without a word or a turn of the head; and the aide on that side would give him a second portfolio, also filled with thousand-franc notes, which might soon go the way of their predecessors in the first portfolio. Of course this stolid and gloomy Turk must have had his winning days; but I was never present when he did not lose.

Nor was my ardent observation of the gambling table confined to Homburg. In that same summer of 1866, we spent a warm week in Baden-Baden. We must have visited this famous watering-place when it was most famous, or at all events before its fame had begun to fade. It was the favorite

summer resort of the fast and fashionable folk of Paris. In Baden-Baden, as at Homburg, I think I enjoyed the walks and the drives in the enviroing woods almost as much as I did my vicarious gambling. I was already beginning to observe humanity, not only those bound to the wheel of fortune, but those who came only to look on at the gambling, to go out to the races, to see and to be seen. I recall that the Russians were almost if not quite as numerous as the Americans. A few years later, when I first read 'Smoke,' I was delighted to discover that Turgenieff had chosen the very year of my visit for the opening episode of his veracious and appealing study from life; and as I ran thru the early pages my memory supplied the landscape with figures that could most exactly illustrate this masterpiece of nineteenth-century fiction.

#### IV

Late in the autumn of 1866 we went down to Italy; we spent Christmas in Florence; and we arrived in Rome to pass the first two or three months of the new year. Our hotel was not far from the Piazza del Popolo, within ear-shot of the barracks sheltering a regiment of the French garrison, which held Rome for the Pope; and two or three times a day the echo of their bugles floated down to us. There were not a few old friends of our family in Rome that winter, of whom I most distinctly recall the distinguished figure of Townsend Harris, maker of the treaty which opened to the world the island

kingdom of Japan. To these American friends were soon added Italian acquaintances, including a certain Prince Massimo, a member of a family so old that it claimed to derive its descent and even its name from a Pontifex Maximus of the second or third century. This kindly old gentleman lingers in my memory as the first prince I had ever spoken to. He came to our balcony during the last days of the carnival, when the maskers were throwing bouquets and scattering confetti, and when the horses were loosed for their mad dash down the Corso, thickly lined with commingled citizens and sight-seers. On the final evening after the last of the *moccoletti* had burned itself out, my father smilingly told us that the prince had asked him if he did not care to have a title, baron or count, explaining that its acquisition would be a simple matter, since all that my father would have to do would be to give a hundred thousand lire or so to some hospital, whereupon the Pope, in recognition of this gift, would be glad to grant a patent of nobility.

Another balcony than ours attracted my attention during those carnival days — that of the de-throned sovereigns of Naples; and I took a juvenile pleasure in gazing up at the young Queen turned out of her kingdom, a beautiful sister of the beautiful Empress of Austria. I think we also beheld the royal exiles more than once when we drove out on the desolate campagna to see the hounds meet, not far from the tomb of Cecelia Metella — where Locker-Lampson tells us in rime he had “left his umbrella.” With my parents I went to the work-

shops of the Vatican, which were then engaged in finishing the interminable series of portraits of the Popes to fill the two or three still empty panels high up on the walls of St. John Lateran. I was taken also to Castellani's to see his Etruscan finds, and his own lovely reproductions and restorations. And there were visits also to the studios of various painters and sculptors, American and Italian — the only one of which that I can now recall with certainty being that of W. W. Story.

The American sculptor-poet, as he was then termed, was finishing the model of a 'Delilah,' which so pleased my father that he purchased it. I feel called upon to register, in these frank and artless confessions, the fact that this statue evoked my earliest effort at esthetic criticism, as pettily pedantic — in despite of my juvenility — as any of which I was ever to be guilty in my later years. Story had chosen for his statue the moment after Delilah had shorn Samson of his luxurious locks; and in the model the strength-giving tresses lay at her feet by the side of the scissors with which she had done the deed of treachery. With the brisk assurance of a youth of scant fifteen, I asked the sculptor if he was certain that the Hebrews had scissors in the days of the Judges. A sudden expression of doubt came into his face as he looked down at me, and he hesitated a moment before he answered: "I think they did have scissors then — but I'm not at all sure. Perhaps it will be safer to change that pair of scissors into a razor. I know that they had razors at that time."

While we were in Rome that winter my instinct for collecting, inherited probably from my father, who delighted in gathering beautiful objects in all the departments of art, and not sated by my childish efforts in New York to form a collection of postage-stamps, took a new turn; I was tempted by the constantly proffered results of incessant excavations to spend most of my very liberal pocket-money in the accumulation of the bronze coins of Rome, republican, imperial, and papal. I aspired most ardently to complete a set of the smaller silver coins with the images and superscriptions of the Twelve Cæsars. As a result of my researches I aroused an interest in Roman history which has survived half a century as a source of enduring pleasure; and I also made what I believed to be a discovery. I knew that in adopting its system of decimal coinage the French republic had followed the example of the American republic; and I now found out that the Roman scudo, with its ten pauls each worth ten baioccos, had come into existence before our dollar, with its ten dimes each worth ten cents, and that therefore the Papal States had anticipated the United States in devising a scientific and labor-saving system of measuring pecuniary values.

I was moved to write a little article to set forth the facts I had found out; and my father sent this to New York and had it printed in a newspaper, paying me ten dollars for it. So it was that I made my first appearance in type when I was only fifteen. I think that the article did not get into print until

after we had left Rome for Naples, and perhaps not until after we had gone north thru Venice (still in the hands of the Austrians) to Vienna, where we arrived in a spring snow-storm. And it was early in the spring that we returned to Paris, where the Exposition was about to open.

## V

My father had taken a house in Paris, in the Rue de la Baume, a quiet offshoot of the Faubourg St. Honoré. The house belonged to a Prince Troubetzkoi; and it stood, as the French phrase has it, "between court and garden," that is to say, there was a spacious courtyard in front for carriages to drive in, and there was an exiguous garden of half an acre in the rear of the house, with a few shrubs and a dozen towering old trees. The ground floor contained a suite of rooms for entertaining, leading up to a superbly spacious music-room; but on the floor above there was only one decent bedroom, all the others being scarcely larger than closets. But there was a large stable; and my father sent to New York for the four-in-hand of beautifully matched Kentucky horses which he drove with assured skill.

The year 1867 saw the culmination of the spectacular splendor of the inglorious Second Empire; it saw also the downfall of the Mexican Empire, which Napoleon had started when the United States was otherwise occupied. The American colony had arranged to have an unusually elaborate celebration of the Fourth of July, and the Pré Catalan had been

engaged to serve as the rural frame of our festivities. My father was on the committee of arrangements; and as his deputy I had been in negotiation with the most accomplished of the manipulators of marionettes in the theaters in the Champs Elysées. Then came the startling news of the capture of Maximilian, and of his summary execution at Queretaro. The imperial court went into mourning, and all festivities were suspended for a brief season. John Bigelow, then the American minister, received a hint that it would be taken as an act of considerate courtesy if we were to forego our Fourth of July celebration, and to my regret I had to go to the Champs Elysées to notify Anatole, *le vrai guignol*, that his services would not be required by us. As some compensation for this disappointment, I persuaded him to copy out for me for a modest reward half-a-dozen of the masterpieces of his comic repertory; and this precious manuscript, in all the effulgence of its simplified spelling, is now preserved in the Dramatic Museum of Columbia University.

All that summer Paris was an Inn of Strange Meetings; and all sorts and conditions of men passed before my boyish gaze. One afternoon Buchanan Read dropped in for a chat with my mother. I knew that he had painted her portrait ten years earlier, but I knew also that he had since written 'Sheridan's Ride,' a far more interesting production to a boy who had lived thru the war than any family portrait could then be. He was the first poet who had ever spoken to me, as the



descendant of the Pontifex Maximus was the first prince. He seemed to me simple, gentle, and kindly, and when my mother told him that I was collecting autographs, he sat down at the library table and wrote out from memory one of his poems — not ‘Sheridan’s Ride,’ as I had hoped, but his own favorite lyric, ‘Drifting’:

“My soul to-day  
Is far away,  
Sailing the Vesuvian Bay;  
My winged boat,  
A bird afloat,  
Swings round the purple peaks remote.”

Altho my mother had given up singing herself, she retained her liking for music; and the spacious music-room that Prince Troubetzkoi had built for himself was often put to its proper purpose when our house was gladdened by a visit from one or another of the three rival American amateur singers then vying with one another in Paris — Miss Fanny Reed, Mrs. Ronalds, and Mrs. Charles Moulton (now Mme. Hegermann Lindencrone). I was taken to the Lyrique to hear Mme. Carvalho in ‘Faust,’ and to the Opéra-Comique to hear Galli-Marié in ‘Mignon,’ both of these operas then in the freshness of their novelty. I saw the walls of Paris plastered with staring portraits of the elder Sothern as Lord Dundreary, with his weeping whiskers and his single eye-glass; and I was taken to the Théâtre Italien to enjoy the encounter between Dundreary and Asa Trenchard, most humorously and most pa-

thetically impersonated by John T. Raymond. I saw also the glittering spectacles of 'Cendrillon' (with its twinkling torchlight procession) at the Châtelet, and of the 'Biche au Bois' at the Porte St. Martin (with a thin slip of a girl in a part of no significance, Sarah-Bernhardt). I was permitted to be a spectator of both of the triumphant successes of the superabundantly successful Sardou, the 'Famille Benoiton' at the Vaudeville (then in its old home near the Bourse), and 'Nos Bons Villageois' at the Gymnase. And I have an unforgettable memory of my first visit to the Théâtre Français, where I had the delight of beholding Delaunay and Favart and Got in Musset's 'On ne badine pas avec l'amour'; and to this day I can hear again the wail of Mlle. Favart as she spoke the final words which separate her forever from her lover: "Adieu, Perdican ! elle est morte."

One afternoon, probably by the courtesy of Mr. Bigelow, we were permitted to attend a sitting of the Corps Legislatif; and by good luck we had the absolutely unexpected experience of seeing Thiers, then the leader of the little knot of the opposition, rise suddenly and make his way to the tribune, where he unsparingly denounced the policies of the empire, both civil and military. Altho we could not foresee it, that fiery speech of Thiers, delivered at the time of the Mexican disasters, really sounded the knell of Napoleon. But in those mid-months of 1867 a knell could scarcely have made itself heard above the deafening tintinnabulation of the joy-bells ringing out loudly day after day, and night

after night. There was incessant entertaining on an extravagantly luxurious scale, not only by the imperial circle, but also by all the several foreign colonies. One evening my father and my mother went out to a big dinner, going on afterward to two receptions, and finally spending an hour or more at a ball; and it was between three and four in the morning when they got into the carriage, whereupon the groom touched his hat and asked: "Where now, madame?"

## VI

Of course these nocturnal dissipations were denied to my tender years; and in compensation I had my diurnal visits to the Exposition itself, my father having presented me with a season ticket, authenticated by my photograph. Altho far surpassed in size by later international fairs, the Paris Exposition of 1867 has never been equalled in the convenience of its arrangements. It was held in the Champs de Mars; and the main building was most ingeniously composed of concentric oval galleries of iron and glass surrounding a garden. The inner hall which opened on this lovely example of urban garden-craft was given up to the fine arts, while every succeeding outer ring was devoted to a separate department of human achievement, the lofty outer gallery containing machinery in motion. This distribution made it easy for any one who wished to examine all the exhibits of the same kind to accomplish this without being distracted by any-

thing else. While the several departments had each its annular hall, the several nations occupied sections more or less triangular (like pieces of pie) extending from the center of the ellipse to the periphery thereof, so that those who wanted to see all that any one country had to show walked not in a circle, but straight thru from the outer ring to the inner.

Left to my own devices by the departure of Carroll, I was diligent in my attendance at the Exposition; and after looking up all the exhibits that I thought would be amusing, I determined to leave nothing unseen, so I conscientiously paced every alleyway, indoors and out. Generally I went alone, but I was sometimes accompanied by my schoolmate at Charlier's, Francis S. Saltus (later to make himself known as a poet). Once when we were passing an Algerian restaurant, the monotonous strumming within allured us to climb a spiral staircase. At the top we beheld only a bare room with two musicians impassively striking their primitive instruments; and as we could detect nothing likely to reward us, we immediately corkscrewed down the stairs, only to be stopped by the guardian below when the alert manager shouted down: "They haven't taken anything" — "*Ces messieurs n'ont pas consommé.*" So we were held to ransom for the consummation devoutly unwished.

The culmination of the Exposition was the day when the prizes were distributed by the Emperor in person. This took place in the Palais de l'Industrie built for the Exposition of 1856, used later for

the annual Salon, and torn down in the final years of the nineteenth century to make room for the Grand and Petit Palais of the Exposition of 1900. The spacious and sumptuously decorated building was filled with thousands of interested spectators, all seated so that they could see the semicircular platform which tongued out from one side, and which was occupied by the Emperor, the Empress, the Prince Imperial, and their imperial, royal, and princely guests. Either before or after I had gazed on the Pope I had been held up to a window of the Hotel Westminster in the Rue de la Paix to behold the carriage, surrounded by the Cent Gardes in their resplendent cuirasses, which was conveying Queen Victoria, who had just arrived in Paris to pay a visit to her ally of the Crimean War. But it was no single monarch I was privileged to behold at that distribution of prizes; it was two or three score of them, all on exhibition at once, as large as life and quite as natural. A few days later my father had occasion to visit Dr. Evans, the American dentist (who was only three years later to be the chief instrument in the escape of the Empress Eugénie from the Tuileries on the night of September 4). "There must have been fifty or sixty royalties on that platform," said Dr. Evans to my father. "And there were only half-a-dozen that I haven't had by the nose!"

It must have been at this time that the Emperor held a grand review at Longchamps in honor of the visiting sovereigns. All the garrison of Paris paraded past the grand-stand, artillery, cavalry, infan-

try, voltigeurs, zouaves, turcos, with their several companies of bearded sappers, and their sturdy vivandières. The climax of the review was the massing of all the cavalry, regiment after regiment, on the opposite side of the race-course, to face at last toward the Emperor, and to charge at full speed across the plain, drawing up suddenly right in front of the sovereign, when every saber flashed out in a simultaneous salute. On the return from Long-champs that afternoon, as we were just entering the Bois de Boulogne, our carriage was less than a hundred yards behind that which conveyed the Emperor of the French and the Czar of Russia. So it was that we heard the startling report of the pistol, fired at the imperial carriage. And the anecdote current at the time reported that each of the monarchs with commingled courtesy and self-control turned to the other and said: "Don't be alarmed; that was meant for *me!*"

## CHAPTER V

### PREPARING FOR COLLEGE

#### I

**I**N November, 1867, we returned to New York; and the question of my more advanced education had to be decided. During our stay in Europe I had heard the name of the École Polytechnique; and for some unguessable reason I was strangely attracted by it. Really I knew little or nothing about the far-famed French institution for the training of engineers, and I did not hear any loud personal call to the profession of engineering; nevertheless, I had got into the habit of asserting that I would like to go to the École Polytechnique. Of course I realize now that this boyish desire was absolutely impossible for various reasons, one of them being that I had no special gift for mathematics. Possessed by this vague aspiration, my thoughts had not turned toward any American college.

When we were settled again in our New York home, I found that certain of my old schoolfellows, and in particular Stuyvesant Fish, my roommate at Churchill's, had just entered Columbia College as freshmen in the class of 1871. And I made up my mind immediately that I would like to go to Columbia as a member of this class. But our sixteen months' absence in Europe had deprived me of a

year's regular schooling; and altho, no doubt, it had been educationally advantageous in many ways, it had not provided me with the specific knowledge needed to enable me to enter college. With his customary kindness my father offered to get me a private tutor, so that I might prepare myself to take the examinations. During the winter I was to make sure of the information needed to enter, but I was also to cover as far as possible the work of the freshman year, which my friends already in college were simultaneously studying. With the aid of another tutor in the summer I hoped that I could fit myself to go up to Columbia in the fall to apply for admission to the sophomore class in which my friends would then be.

What I proposed to do was to make up a year of preparation, and also to cover a full year of college work, and to do this in about eight months. It was not an impossible or even a very difficult feat for an ambitious lad of fifteen, diligent in study, and sternly resolved to accomplish what he had set out to achieve. The trouble with me was that I was not then ambitious or diligent or resolute. Hitherto I had taken life very easily, and I simply did not know what hard work meant. I had never learned how to learn; and at no one of the schools I had attended had I come under the influence of a born teacher who might have awakened my aspirations and roused me out of my happy-go-lucky cheerfulness. And as a result of this I did not take my new task seriously. I had an unhesitating confidence that all would go well somehow.



I knew that I was "quick" and "clever," that I was considered to be a "bright" boy; and I did not suspect that this was an immense disadvantage, since it tended irresistibly toward superficiality. I was alert, and I easily acquired the outlines of anything I attacked; but I never mastered it thoroly; and I did not attack anything with genuine ardor. I had no training, no discipline, no power to compel myself to stick to any one thing until I had got the utmost out of it. I was very easy-going with myself; and I had never been toughened by a hard tussle with anything that seemed to me worth while. The deficiencies that I did not suspect when I was fifteen I discovered before I was twenty-five; and the training I failed to get from any teacher in my boyhood I had to get for myself after I had come to man's estate; and then it was not got without difficulty, since I had no habit of application to help me in overcoming my own inertia. But when a man is his own master he can be the hardest of task-masters. My change of heart was brought about by my awakening to the painful fact that so-called quickness and cleverness and brightness were pretty poor substitutes for thoroness — and that, like other substitutes, they were often only bounty-jumpers. I found out when I came to measure myself with others that superficial smattering was not a precious possession, and that honest labor was its own reward.

What I most needed to make up was Latin, Greek, and mathematics, studies entirely neglected in Europe even while Carroll was with us. My father engaged an elderly Scotsman named Henderson to give me

lessons in these subjects, wherein I had fallen behind. I had had Henderson as my classical teacher three years before at Charlier's, where he was still engaged. As his morning hours were thus occupied he could come to me only in the evening. I was supposed to study in the forenoon and to recite to him every night what I might have learned. There was a large room in the basement of our house, originally intended for a breakfast-room, and this was assigned to me as a study. It had two large closets; and in one of these a sneak-thief once concealed himself just before Henderson and I came down to our evening labors. After my lesson was over and Mr. Henderson had departed, the thief went up-stairs to my mother's bedroom and helped himself to her jewelry. Then he calmly went out the front door with his booty. We found out later that this sneak-thief had been prowling along Fifth Avenue, probably with no special design on our house. He had happened to see a tradesman's boy coming out of the basement door, and he had promptly bidden the lad to leave it open as he had a package to deliver. Once inside he had investigated my study, and had slipped into the closet when he heard us coming down for my lesson. And in this closet he had remained shut up for nearly two hours, while Henderson and I were indulging in the quest of the second aorist. When Henderson was told about the hidden listener, he remarked that the sneak-thief had had gratuitous instruction in the classics. "If you catch him, I'll send him my bill!"

## II

The jewelry stolen from my mother was valuable; yet the sneak-thief might have made a more satisfactory haul if he had been able to get into the drawing-room floor, which was a museum of objects of art, acquired in Rome and more especially in Paris, where my father had purchased many of the most important examples of goldsmith's work prepared for the Exposition. During our absence the house itself had been in the skilful hands of Christian Herter (the father of Mr. Albert Herter); and it was due to Herter's suggestion that my father had commissioned Galland to paint eight exquisite panels for the music-room, four of the Seasons, and four of the Elements, single female figures floating in the air, each with a little child playing on the ground below. With his innate dislike for make-shifts and second-bests, my father had ordered in Paris curtains of real lace for the windows of the drawing-room — an externally visible evidence of taste which soon caused our home to be designated as "the point-lace house."

Another and more enduring testimony of his judgment is St. Bartholomew's Church. My father had been elected a vestryman when the congregation occupied a bare and barn-like edifice on the corner of Lafayette Place and Great Jones Street. When the movement up-town led to the purchase of a new site at Madison Avenue and 44th Street, the vestrymen had almost accepted an empty and yet tawdry design by a builder devoid of architectural training.

My father in disgust went to his old friend, James Renwick, the architect of Grace Church and of St. Patrick's Cathedral, and agreed to pay out of his own pocket for a more seemly design if the vestry should decline it. When Renwick and Sands had prepared the plans for the present church, my father procured bids from responsible builders, who stood ready to erect the more stately building for less money than the tasteless design was estimated to cost. In view of this combination of art and business, the other members of the vestry could not but see the advantage of intrusting the new church to the architects to whom my father had gone.

My father's liking for the best attainable was illustrated again in St. Bartholomew's one morning after we had listened to a moving appeal for domestic missions. There were cards in all the pews with pencils attached, so that the emotional response to the sermon might be immediately translated into cash. These cards had separate spaces for Subscriptions, Donations, and for Annual Stipends of individual missionaries, and these stipends might be for any amount from five hundred dollars to a thousand. I saw my father fill out a card and drop it into the plate. On our way home I asked him what he had written, and he told me that he had made himself responsible for a stipend for three years. Then I returned that these stipends were for varying sums, whereupon my father smiled. "If I am going to have a personal representative as a missionary on the frontier," he said, "I want the best I can get."

The meetings of the vestry of St. Bartholomew's were held in the evening at the houses of the several members; and when the personal business had been attended to, the host of the occasion led the way to a simple supper. At a gathering at the house of the vestryman who had been responsible for the ugly design, and who was also one of the most liberal contributors toward the cost of erecting the new church, a fellow vestryman, equally deficient in esthetic perception, made a complimentary remark about the somewhat emphatic decoration of the dining-room. "Yes," said the complacent host, "I've had the entire house done over. I asked who was the best decorator in New York, and they told me it was an Italian named Gariboldi. So I had him estimate on the whole job; and when I got his estimate, I told him to go ahead and do the best he could for half the money." Then he waved his hand in a curve of complete satisfaction. "And you see the result!"

My father had other and more congenial friends; and of these the one I came to know best, and to like best, was Townsend Harris. He dined with us every Sunday; and we often saw him on the other days of the week. He was a man of the most polished manners and of infinite tact; and it was not difficult to perceive the qualities which had enabled him to win the regard and the confidence of the suspicious Japanese. I regret greatly that I cannot now remember more of his experiences in the East. There was one which he did not like to recall but which I heard him tell at least once. When he had

at last succeeded in persuading the Japanese to sign the treaty which opened the island-kingdom to citizens of the United States, he carried out the orders of our government to facilitate the negotiation of similar treaties by other powers, and before he left Japan he was instrumental in aiding the Prussians and the British to make their treaties. In recognition of his courtesy he received the order of the Black Eagle from Prussia; and Queen Victoria wrote him an autograph letter of thanks, accompanying it with a diamond snuff-box. Our Civil War was still raging when he departed from Japan; and the sympathies of the British in the Orient were strongly in favor of the South. So violent was their hostility to the United States that the captain of one of the British steamers which Mr. Harris had to take on his return home, one day chose to express his feelings by running up the Confederate flag; and this outrage to a representative of the American people was cheered by the British passengers. As a result of this insult Mr. Harris never thereafter set foot on British soil, or on a British ship. When we were going to Europe he always came down to the boat to see us off, if we were taking a French or a German line, but if we had chosen a British line he would bid us farewell the night before we sailed.

Mr. Harris had a keen sense of humor, and he could not only take a joke on himself but also tell about it. During his brief stay in China, before going to Japan, he dined once with a distinguished mandarin; and by some mishap the expected in-

terpreter failed to appear, thus leaving the guest of honor unable to tell his host how much he was enjoying the dinner, which was a succession of delicious dishes unknown to Occidental cookery. One of these dishes was apparently a game stew, which Mr. Harris supposed to be compounded of duck; and desiring to make sure of this, he indicated by expressive pantomime that it was most grateful to his palate, and then pointing to it, he uttered an interrogative "Quack-quack-quack?" Whereupon his smiling host shook his head and gently responded: "Bow-wow-wow!" — thereby informing his guest that they had been feasting on the famous edible dog.

To Mr. Harris, before he went to Japan, was due the founding of the first boys' high school, the Free Academy, now known as the College of the City of New York; and it was a fitting recognition of his foresight when the most important of the new buildings of the city college received the name of Townsend Harris Hall. After his return to New York he was a constant frequenter of the Union Club, and as he had no liking for incessant discussion of the stock-market, he did not find there many congenial associates. There were a scant half-dozen old friends always glad of his society, and with them he drew apart. "We talk sense at one end of the room," he used to say, "while the rest of them are talking dollars at the other." He retained his faculties to the end of his long life; but he came in time to have an unwarranted fear that he had outstayed his welcome in the world. "I ought to have gone to the

South Seas," I have heard him say, "before I was too old. There I should have been killed and eaten long ago."

### III

I have already confessed that I did not take my studies as seriously as I ought to have done; and I permitted myself various distractions. One result of my thoro exploration of the Exposition had been my discovery of Voisin, the maker of magical apparatus; and my frequent visits to his dingy shop in the Rue Vieille du Temple had been to stimulate my earlier interest in conjuring; and I soon found more than one friend who shared my taste for the fascinating art of Robert-Houdin. From Paris I had also brought back implements for the exercise of the kindred art of juggling; in time I became fairly adept in hat-spinning and in keeping three or four brass balls in the air. A little set of puppet figures, also the spoil of my Parisian summer, was called into service almost as soon as I returned to New York, for I was rash enough to volunteer a Punch and Judy performance as a side-show in a fair for the benefit of the St. Barnabas Home. I was not sixteen when I made this first appearance as a showman; and, strictly speaking, it was not an appearance, since I was concealed from view by the draperies dependent from the ledge from which Mr. Punch took the club to beat Mrs. Judy.

I must record also that three years earlier while I was at Charlier's, some of my schoolmates had got



up an imitation of one of the Ravel pantomimes, in which I was permitted to disport myself lugubriously as the clown; and after whitening myself for this part, I blacked up a little later to tap on the tambourine in an amateur minstrel show. I may anticipate to note that a year or two thereafter I played a low comedy part in a one-act farce, 'Turn Him Out.' These various histrionic efforts of mine cannot have been very exhilarating to their several audiences; but they were beneficial to me, as they convinced me that, whatever my native gifts might be, they certainly did not qualify me to persist in trying to act. My liking for the stage continued to grow; but I early became aware that if I was ever to make my way thru the stage door, it would be as an author and not as an actor.

In Paris the preceding summer I had gone to a gymnasium in the Rue St. Honoré and there I had been well taught. I had even progressed so far as to be able to accomplish the more elementary feats of the flying trapeze — that is to say, I could at least project myself from one trapeze and clinch the other as it swung toward me. Now in New York I became an assiduous frequenter of Gebhard's gymnasium, on the top floor of 161 Fifth Avenue, at the corner of Broadway and 22d Street. As I recited to Mr. Henderson in the evening and as I was supposed to study only in the morning, I had my afternoons to myself, and I spent nearly all of them at Gebhard's. I took lessons in fencing and in boxing from the special teachers who shared the ample floor-space of the gymnasium, altho in neither

of these arts of offense and defense did I ever attain any high degree of skill. My chief interest was in the gymnasium itself, where I often had the companionship of professional acrobats assiduously practising in private the feats they were to perform in public.

In the course of the winter a group of boys of my own age, working together afternoon after afternoon, not only gratified a strong liking for acrobatics, but also acquired a certain degree of skill. We followed the example of the occasional professionals who used the same apparatus and made a habit of practising always in the trunks and fleshings which gave complete freedom to our limbs. We did single and double trapeze acts; we achieved the giant-swing and the muscle-grind on the horizontal bar; we lay on our backs in the stand devised for the purpose, and strove to juggle a barrel with our feet; we learned to leap with the aid of the *battoute* board; and we built ourselves up into pyramids, in which I had to bear the weight of two or three others on my shoulders. When spring came we were so proud of our proficiency that we gave a set entertainment.

A faded copy of our program, surviving miraculously for nearly half a century, reminds me that this "First Annual Exhibition of the Amateur Gymnastic Club," took place at eight on the evening of Wednesday, April 15, 1868, and that the whole class began the first part by indian-club exercises, and then displayed their agility on the parallel bars, in horse-vaulting, on the flying rings, in the long jump, and the high jump, and finally on the hori-

zontal bar. The class-leader on the parallel bars was Hermann Oelrichs; whereas in the long jump and in the high jump the others followed Charles B. Jefferson (the eldest son of Joseph Jefferson), and the writer of this record. In the second part the opening number was "Juggling by B. Matthews"; this was followed by a double-trapeze act, and a flying-trapeze act in which I had no hand, the intermediate number being "Grotesque Gymnastics, including the Enchanted Hats, Gymnastic Gyrations, and a Terrific Broadsword Combat, by the Corriero Brothers." The Corriero brothers were three in number, and the other two were Oelrichs and Jefferson, who were responsible for the carefully studied fight with combat-swords (very like that described in 'Nicholas Nickleby'); and I took part in the earlier hat-spinning and in the "frog-leaps" and "porpoise-leaps" which masqueraded as gymnastic gyrations. The program wound up with "The Cyclops by Eight Members of the Club"; I recall this as an imitation of the "brothers act" of the Hanlons.

The spectators of this first and last annual exhibition of this gymnastic club were mainly our families and our friends, but there was also a sprinkling of the professional circus men who were accustomed to frequent the gymnasium. After most of our guests had departed and while we were talking things over preparatory to getting out of our tights and our "Léotard bodies," one of these circus men accosted me. "Say," he began, "are you one of the Corriero brothers?" I admitted it. "Well," he went on, "how would you three boys like to go on

the road this summer under canvas?" The father of one of the Corrieros was the most popular actor on the English-speaking stage; the father of another was the head of Oelrichs and Co., the agents of the North German Lloyd; and the father of the third was then steadily engaged in buying expensive real estate. So the possible pecuniary rewards of a summer on the road under canvas were not overwhelmingly alluring to any one of us. But no mere money could measure our ecstatic delight at this professional recognition of our juvenile efforts. To this day I can recall the thrill that ran thru me as I heard this most gratifying proposal, and I can see again the joyous expression which came over the faces of Jefferson and Oelrichs when I transmitted the offer to them. In the life of any man such a moment of triumph can never be frequent.

#### IV

Gebhard's gymnasium did not take up the whole of the top floor of the building; and a large room on the north side was occupied as a studio by J. Q. A. Ward, the sculptor. Sometimes he would come out into the gymnasium in his gray blouse, stained with clay, and stand there silently watching as we swung on the flying rings or rolled over on the mat in porpoise-leaps. And one day when I was alone, because I had come early he accosted me. "Don't you want to help me?" he asked. "I'm at work on a statue of Shakspeare for Central Park, and I can't get a model for the legs — at least I can't get one that

suits me. I wish you would let me have the loan of your legs." Why it was that I refused this slight favor to a distinguished artist I do not now remember; probably partly from boyish shyness and partly from boyish selfishness, preferring to be busy about my own acrobatic exercises than to stand motionless for the benefit of a sculptor. More than twoscore years after this foolish refusal, Ward's statue was chosen as the frontispiece of my volume on 'Shakspeare as a Playwright'; and then I regretted in vain that the work of my hand in my maturity was not also to be adorned by the reproduction of my legs in my boyhood.

I can set down with more pleasure the record of my relations with another artist who came to the gymnasium either that winter or the next; this was Léotard, the originator of the flying trapeze. I have been told that his father was the manager of a swimming-bath at Bordeaux, and that he first practised his flights from one trapeze to another over the open water, into which he could fall without danger. He had perfected his evolutions thru space before he made his first appearances in Paris with his startling novelty. This was in 1863 or thereabouts; and the fame of it had instantly spread to America. The Hanlons swiftly dispatched one of their number to Paris to study Léotard and to bring back his method to New York; then they hired the Academy of Music and plastered all over the city the mysterious word *Zampillaërostation*, which they had caused to be concocted to describe the art of flying thru the air. The Hanlons were acrobats then, and not

the pantomimists they became later; but they had already a keen feeling for theatrical effect. Only after all the other Hanlons had most cautiously tested the several trapezes, as tho the slightest inaccuracy of balance might involve the danger of death, did the Hanlon who was to emulate Léotard appear at last; he was enfolded in a flowing black cloak, and before casting this off to begin his act, he shook hands, solemnly and severally, with his brothers.

Léotard was not only the originator of the flying trapeze, he was also its incomparable performer — incomparable in the manly beauty of his figure, in the easy certainty of his execution, and in the un-failing grace of all his attitudes. He came to Gebhard's for private practice, and as he did not speak English, and as I had a fair fluency in French, I got to know him very well. He seemed to be a simple and modest fellow, with a keen understanding of his art; he had a feeling for it which I can now understand better than I did then, and which I can describe best by saying that he held himself to be a professor of beauty, an exponent of the graceful in action. Of course, he never formulated it in this fashion; but I am sure it is not an unfair deduction from one of our talks. He had asked me to swing the second trapeze for him as he came forward on the first. I did so, and to my amazement I saw him holding by only one hand to the middle of the trapeze-bar, then letting go and catching the second trapeze in the center; he swung forward and on the backward movement he twisted suddenly

and caught the bar of the first trapeze. That is to say, he had gone from the first trapeze to the second and then back to the first with the use of the right hand only.

After I had expressed my wonder at this extraordinary feat, I said: "But why have I never seen you do that in public?"

"No," he answered; "and you never will."

And when I asked him why not, he replied: "I'll do it again. Watch me and you will see the reason."

Then he did it again, and when he had dropped to the floor he looked at me and inquired: "Do you see now?"

"Well," I responded, "it takes a pretty violent effort. With only one hand, you can't help being a little awkward."

"That's it," he explained, "that's just it. It is very awkward — that is to say, it must be ungraceful. It is excellent for my own practice. But in public I must never make any violent effort. I must seem to be doing it easily; and I must always be graceful."

This is why I have called Léotard an artist; and in his own line he was as rigidly bound by the eternal rules of his art as was Ward. And thus it was that in my boyhood I received from an acrobat an illustration of the abiding truth of the Horatian maxim that to conceal art is the highest art.

## V

Despite these distractions I made sufficient progress with my studies to pass the entrance examinations to Columbia College late that spring; and in the summer when we went to Newport my father engaged another tutor to prepare me to present myself in the fall to pass the examinations which would admit me to the sophomore class. While we sometimes spent part of the summer at Saratoga, coming down to West Point for the last fortnight before returning to town, we were likely to go to Newport, where my father had more than once been on the point of purchasing a cottage. Generally he hired a house for the summer; but he recognized the truth of a remark once made to him by Mrs. Paran Stevens: "You see the cottagers have the inside track!"

It was in the summer of 1864, four years earlier, that my father had taken me to call on an old friend of his who had a son of my own age; and thus it was that, when I was only twelve I made the acquaintance of W. C. Brownell, the only friend of my later manhood who is the son of a friend of my father's early manhood. In those Newport days of youth we met only infrequently; and our real friendship dates from a later time. When we came together again, he was one of the office staff of the *Nation*, and I an occasional contributor.

It was, however, in this summer of 1868 that I took part in an inglorious raid, the result of the



bitter feeling of hostility toward England which resulted from her attitude during the recently ended Civil War. One of a half-dozen other boys whom I then knew at Newport discovered that an Englishman was occupying a cottage out near Ochre Point, and that he was flaunting his offensive nationality by flying the British flag over a tent on his lawn. We planned at once to make a nocturnal expedition to destroy the obnoxious banner; and one moonlight night we walked out to the offending house, sternly resolved to show the alien that the Union Jack had no right to be displayed on American soil. When we had arrived where the tent gleamed white in the moonbeams, we could not perceive the hated standard; and then we realized, too late, that we had come on a fool's errand, since the flag had, of course, been lowered at sunset.

When the summer came to an end I could not but be aware that my studying had been desultory and unsatisfactory even to myself. It was with trepidation that I presented myself at Columbia as an applicant for admission to the sophomore class. My knowledge was so insufficient that I probably did not appreciate how inadequately I was equipped for the ordeal. Yet I was none the less disagreeably surprised when I went up to learn the result of my examination, and when I was informed by Professor Van Amringe that my application to enter as a sophomore was refused, and that I had, therefore, to join the entering freshman class. Of course, this was a most proper verdict of the faculty; and there was no good reason why I should not accept it —

except that I had more friends in the class of 1871 than I had in the class of 1872, and that therefore I wanted to be received as a sophomore.

I went home to my father, who sympathized with my disappointment. The next morning he paid a visit to Columbia and had a long interview with President Barnard. What arguments he was able to use in a bad cause I cannot now guess; but he won his point, probably by the weight of his own personality. The president overruled the decision of the faculty and admitted me to the advanced standing I sought on the sole condition that I should take a tutor and make up the deficiencies in my preparation.

## CHAPTER VI

### UNDERGRADUATE DAYS

#### I

**T**HE college which I entered as a student in the fall of 1868 was a totally different institution from the university of the same name in which I am now a professor; and to those who know Columbia in the first quarter of the twentieth century as one of the strongest and most coherently organized of American universities, it is not easy to convey an illuminating idea of the simplicity and isolation of Columbia College in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. The great university of the present is the logical development of the small college of the past, little as they may seem to have in common; and as I look back now I perceive that it was in my senior year when there appeared the earliest sign of a transformation of the rigid traditions accepted without cavil or comment when I was a sophomore. These traditions were survivals, inherited by the college of the nineteenth century from the college of the eighteenth century; and the college in the eighteenth century must have been more or less inferior to a high school of the best type in the twentieth century, with less liberality and with less richness of opportunity.

A scant decade before I came to it Columbia had abandoned the group of buildings originally erected

for King's College, and taken possession of a deserted deaf-and-dumb asylum on the block between Madison and Fourth Avenues and 49th and 50th Streets. That part of New York had then scarcely begun to be built up; neither St. Patrick's Cathedral nor the Grand Central Station was completed; and there were then foul cattle-yards just below the college, stretching from Madison to Fifth Avenue. Central Park was just finished after about fifteen years' work; but scarcely a house skirted its edges even along its southern side. The main building of the college was architecturally pretentious, but undeniably shabby in its coat of dingy stucco; and this was flanked by two smaller edifices equally devoid of dignity and beauty. One of these smaller houses was the residence of a professor, whose wash was flaunted in our gaze at the beginning of every week; and the other provided a large bare room which served as a chapel, while the upper floor contained the library, such as it was. The main building had half a dozen classrooms; and here also was the office of the president, for whom an official residence of red brick and brown stone had been erected on the 49th Street front. Back on the corner of Fourth Avenue and 50th Street was an old sash-and-blind factory assigned to the recently established School of Mines.

In my time there was no solidarity of sentiment between the undergraduates of the college and the students of the School of Mines; and I doubt if I then knew by sight more than three or four of the "Miners." Nor did we have occasion to meet the

law students, since their school was more than two miles distant — in Lafayette Place. And only nominal was the connection of Columbia with the proprietary College of Physicians and Surgeons, which was almost equally remote — at the corner of Fourth Avenue and 23d Street. With the attendants at these other schools more or less attached to Columbia, the undergraduates of the old college had no points of contact, and sought none. We did not doubt that we were the sole representatives of Columbia, and that all the others were merely outsiders.

We might consider ourselves a select body, and we were certainly a very small community. First and last the class of 1871 may have had a scant half-hundred members; in the course of our four years not a few fell by the wayside; and we numbered only thirty-one when we graduated, at which time the junior class had thirty men, the sophomore twenty-three, and the freshman thirty-six, making the total undergraduate attendance exactly one hundred and twenty. We were not only far fewer than the senior class of to-day, we were also much younger. For example, I was nineteen when I graduated, nor was I the youngest by one or two; and the average age of the members of the class on entering was less than sixteen.

It is to this comparative juvenility that I must ascribe the disorderly conduct of which we were now and then guilty, our occasional boisterous neglect of stated exercises, and our less frequent outbreaks of actual violence, even in our senior year, when handfuls of fine shot were thrown repeatedly

at an unfortunate lecturer who had failed to win our respect. We were only boys after all; and we had none of the latter-day safety-valves for our animal spirits. It is true that there was a plot of grass under the trees where we could kick a casual football after hours; but this was the sole available outlet for our boyish energy. The area of our activities, educational and social, was almost as restricted as the space available for our physical exercises. Perhaps the simplicity of our life can be exemplified by a single fact: all the exercises of the institution were suspended whenever a trustee of the college died. Naturally we held it to be unfair and even mean for any trustee to die on a Saturday, and so cheat us out of our unexpected holiday.

Henry James once pointed out that here in the United States in Hawthorne's youth there were lacking most of the constituent elements of romance as these might be cataloged on the European continent, since we had no king and no court, no palaces and no castles, no cathedrals and no established church, no galleries and museums, no political society, and no sporting class. It would not be difficult to draw up a list of things common in nearly all the colleges of the present which were totally absent from the Columbia of my early undergraduate days. We had no dormitories; we had no gymnasium and no athletic field, no swimming-pool, and no boat-house; we had no athletics at all, no track-teams, no crew, no baseball nine; we had no glee-club and no mandolin-club; we had no dramatics, no performances of plays ancient or modern; we had no

intercollegiate debates; we had no college paper, daily or weekly; we had no student reading-rooms, nor had we any books that students were really expected to read.

After listing the blanks in Hawthorne's background, Mr. James suggested that "the natural remark in the almost lurid light of such an indictment, would be that if these things are left out, everything is left out." Then the acute critic added that "the American knows that a good deal remains." And we who were undergraduates at Columbia when it exhibited this "terrible denudation" know that a great deal remained, even if it is not easy for us to declare this remainder with precision. The background might have its blanks, but after all the atmosphere was not so very different from what it is now. We had the unconquerable spirit of youth, and we were possessed by a feeling of solidarity. We dumbly knew that we had entered into our inheritance — even if we were incapable of appreciating its value.

## II

In so small a college the president was able to call all the students by name, and to give them personal attention. To him their discipline was intrusted, altho on occasion a student might be summoned to appear before the entire faculty. If we were late, it was to the president that we had to go to make our excuses. We had profound respect for Dr. Barnard; we knew him to be as kindly as

he was distinguished; but we could not help perceiving that he was very deaf — and there were those among us not unwilling to take unworthy advantage of this patent infirmity. More than once an undergraduate who lived a little way up the Hudson went into the president's office to ask forgiveness for his tardiness, raising his voice on certain words and lowering them on others. "I am sorry I was *late* this morning. I wish I could say that the *train was behind time* — but I can't." And to this the president would reply: "As the train was late, you are excused." There was even a story that, one year before my time, when Dr. Barnard himself gave the senior course on the 'Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion,' the class quartet used to gather at the far end of the long room and practise their part-songs, until the president was moved to complain about the constant buzzing of which his ears made him doubtfully conscious.

Perhaps one reason why we behaved now and again as if we were unruly boys is that we were treated as boys. We had none of the liberty into which freshmen now enter when once they have matriculated. For us the college was only a continuation of the school we had just left, with no larger opportunity, and with no change in the method of instruction. The program of studies was rigidly restricted and it did not vary year after year. The whole undergraduate body was required to attend chapel at a quarter before ten; and there we found awaiting us the entire faculty, which consisted then of only seven professors. At ten our solid class went



to its first recitation; at eleven it moved on for another; at twelve it presented itself before a third professor; and at one we were free for the rest of the day. When I say that we went to three recitations a day, I mean it; we recited exactly as we had done in school. We were expected to prepare so many lines of Latin and Greek, or so many problems in mathematics, or so many pages of the text-book in logic or in political economy; and in the classroom we were severally called upon to disgorge this undigested information. And it was information that we were expected to acquire, rather than the ability to turn this to account and to think for ourselves.

We were rarely encouraged to go outside the text-book; and no collateral reading was either required or suggested. We were not urged to use the library; indeed it might be asserted that any utilization of its few books was almost discouraged. The library was open only for one or two hours a day, after one o'clock when most of us had gone home to our luncheons. I, for one, never climbed its stairs to avail myself of its carefully guarded treasures; and I doubt if any one of my classmates was more daring in adventuring himself within its austere walls, lined with glazed cases all cautiously locked. It contained less than fifteen thousand volumes; and it possessed no book which the grave and learned custodian had not personally examined to make sure that it was fit reading for youths of our tender years. This scrupulous librarian was allowed a sum of one thousand dollars a year for the increase

of his collection; and he purchased only the very few volumes which he felt to be absolutely necessary, taking great pride in returning to the treasury of the college as large an unexpended balance as might be possible.

Professor Lounsbury once told me that during his student career at Yale, a little more than ten years earlier than mine at Columbia, he never heard mention of any English author. In the decade that divided us the world had moved at least a little; and we had one term in the history of English literature. But we were not introduced to the actual writings of any of the authors, nor was any hint dropped that we might possibly be benefited by reading them for ourselves. We had to procure a certain manual of English literature, and to recite from its pages the names of writers, the titles of books, and the dates of publication — facts of little significance and of slight value unless we happened to be familiar with the several authors as a result of home influence, or of private taste. The manual prescribed for us was the compilation of a stolid text-book maker by the name of Shaw; and it illustrated admirably the definition of history as “an arid region abounding in dates.”

In its freshman year, which I had skipped, my class had had a course in rhetoric, also studied in a formal text-book, providing detailed information as to the names which had been bestowed upon the several devices employed in the art of composition. But there was little or no instruction in the art itself, in the actual practice of writing. The course

in rhetoric was given by a tutor, whereas the course in English literature was given by a professor. This professor was a very learned Scotsman, Charles Murray Nairne; and the full title of his chair disclosed the fact that to him was intrusted the instruction in "Moral and Intellectual Philosophy and English Literature." Yet this title, ample as it may seem, did not indicate the complete range of his responsibilities, for to him was also committed the care of history, of political economy, and of logic. It was not only a chair that he filled, or even a settee; it was a series of settees, rising row on row; and there are now at Columbia probably nearly a hundred professors teaching the subjects which were then confided to the sole care of this one man.

I think, altho I am not at all certain, that I must have had a course in philosophy, but if I did it left no trace, and it imparted no mental training. I do not suppose that the instruction was inferior at Columbia then to what it was in most of the other small colleges; in fact, I am inclined to believe that it was on the whole superior. Yet I have always regretted that I did not come under a teacher who might have imparted to me a realizing sense of the meaning and the value of philosophy, who might have opened my mind and taught me how to think. There was then a teacher of this type at Amherst, where my friend W. C. Brownell was my contemporary; and in the Amherst men of Seelye's time I have always been able to perceive the mark of his stimulating influence. I remember that I had one term in logic and another in political economy;

and altho the latter introduced me to sound doctrine, the former left absolutely no impression. From our single term in English literature under Professor Nairne, I can resuscitate only one utterance of his — to the effect that the distinction between poetry and prose might be made clear by remembering that “exceeding beautiful” was prose, whereas “beautiful exceedingly” was poetry.

It was in Latin and in Greek that I suffered the most from my deficient preparation, due partly to my foolish desire to enter as a sophomore, without having had the full work of freshman year and partly, indeed chiefly, to the fact that no one of my school-teachers at Anthon’s or Churchill’s or Charlier’s had made me understand the necessity of thoroughness. I had insisted on being allowed to take my place in the ranks, when I ought to have been undergoing the merciless drill of the awkward squad. Naturally enough my acquaintance with Latin was less fragmentary than with Greek. The professor of Latin was Charles Short, a man of many amusing peculiarities, but possessed of real learning and inspired by a genuine love of letters. He opened my eyes to the charm of Horace, the chief Roman representative of what Cowper called “familiar verse”; and as he suggested that we cast into metrical form our assigned translations, I owe to him almost my earliest impulse to spy out the secrets of English versification.

The professor of Greek was Henry Drisler, one of the most copious contributors to Liddell and Scott’s dictionary. He was an erudite scholar with an abid-

ing simplicity of manner in all his dealings with us. In his classroom, we stumbled thru the 'Agamemnon' of Æschylus, the 'Œdipus Rex' of Sophocles, the 'Medea' of Euripides, and the 'Frogs' of Aristophanes. Brief as it was, no better selection could be made of the plays typical of the development of Greek drama, tragic and comic; and the reading of these masterpieces in the original might have been expected to awaken in me a keen interest in the Attic theater. I was already an assiduous playgoer, having also some slight acquaintance with the French stage; but a suggestion that we should procure Donaldson's 'Theater of the Greeks' was not pushed any further, and I failed entirely to feel the theatrical effectiveness of any one of the four pieces.

Either Professor Drisler did not himself visualize these once popular plays as having been originally devised by their several authors to be performed by actual actors in a real theater before sympathizing audiences, or else he did not believe that we were old enough or ripe enough in scholarship to take this point of view. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that in his classroom these plays were not revealed to us as drama, or even as poetry; they were only texts for translation, affording endless opportunities for a strictly grammatical inquisition into the darker interstices of our linguistic half-knowledge. Thus it is that my undergraduate study of Sophocles, for instance, did not reveal to me the loftiness of his soul, the vigor of his stern philosophy or his exquisitely skilful craftsmanship as a playwright; it left me rather with an annoying per-

ception of his persistent perversity in employing the second aorist.

Here again I feel bound to emphasize my belief that my class at Columbia was not more unfortunate in our study of the great dramatic poets of Greek than the immense majority of other classes in other colleges, not only in those remote days but even now. There are still only a few professors of Greek who endeavor to make their students realize and visualize the Greek theater, who illustrate their instruction by the aid of the graphic material now abundantly available, and who strive to relate it intimately to the Athenian life of that superb and astounding epoch. I remember that when Benjamin Ide Wheeler (now president of the University of California) was a professor at Cornell, I heard a fellow professor of Greek mention with unconcealed disapproval, that "Ben Wheeler is teaching Greek with a magic lantern!"

### III

In the summer of 1869, in the vacation that intervened between my sophomore and my junior years, my father allowed me to go on a trip to the West. I suppose that he thought it would be well for me to see something of my own country, after having seen more or less of Europe as a child and as a boy. One of my college friends, Edward Fernor Hall, accompanied me; and we were under the charge of a teacher from Charlier's, Mr. Brown. We went first to Chicago, where we took a steamer to the end

of Lake Michigan, leaving it to shoot the rapids of Sault Ste. Marie while the boat was going thru the locks, and landing at Superior City opposite Duluth. Superior City had been laid out on a most magnificent scale, befitting the future metropolis, which was to mark the end of navigation on the great lakes. When we arrived its boom had already burst, and it had only a hundred or two inhabitants. One of its projectors was John C. Breckenridge, with whom we had a brief interview. Duluth was less than half-a-dozen miles distant, and it had then exactly half-a-dozen houses.

It was our intention to go up the St. Louis River into the Chippewa Reservation, and to make a carry over to one of the streams flowing into the Mississippi which would bear us down to Minneapolis. In Superior City we bought a birch canoe; we filled it with supplies for a fortnight; and we engaged two Indians to take us on our trip. The first night we camped at Fond du Lac on the banks of the St. Louis River within earshot of Duluth, where there had been landed only that day the earliest of the many boat-loads of men who were to be engaged in building the Northern Pacific Railroad. We had been told that these laborers were dissatisfied about something; that they had got at liquor; and that they might make trouble. At intervals during the night we heard shouts and occasional shots; and in the morning we were not sorry to be able to start on our voyage.

There had been more rain than usual at that season — it was then July; and the river was out

of its banks. The series of cascades known as the Dalles of the St. Louis were far wider than they ordinarily were; and we poled slowly up the shallower sides of the stream. Soon we had to give this up and to make a seven-mile carry, sometimes with the water almost up to our waists. The rain was intermittent but abundant; and the trail was a neglected corduroy road, with only an occasional log in its proper place, the others having rotted away or sunk deep into the mud. We three whites were thoroly tired out by our unwonted miles over an unaccustomed road; but the Indians seemed to feel no fatigue at all, altho they had to make the trip three times, once with the huge birch canoe, carried on their shoulders as they pushed past the dripping trees and thru the soaking underbrush, keeping up their steady jog-trot, and again as they went back to bring us the supplies which we had been unable to carry for ourselves.

When at last in the twilight of the forest we made our camp on the bank of the St. Louis above the Dalles it was still raining, and I observed with keen appreciation the swiftness with which the Indians found dry wood, and made a fire, cut poles for our shelter-tents, and gathered springy evergreen twigs to make beds for us, so that we might be lifted a little above the sodden grass and moss. We were protected from the rain only by two or three rubber blankets laced together and thrown over poles that slanted forward to the fire; and we lay under this fragile shed with our feet almost in the ashes, and with our legs covered by other rubber blankets,



while on the opposite side of the blazing logs the two Indians, each curled up into a ball like a squirrel, slept with their heads under their woollen blankets, which were ever absorbing more and more moisture.

It was the first time I had ever lived out in the open; the first time I had ever camped out; the first time I had ever entered the forest primeval; the first time I had ever come into personal relations with the red man, whom I knew then not from Cooper and Parkman, but only from Edward S. Ellis's stories in the yellow-back Beadle's Dime Novels. The two Indians who were with us spoke no English, and their sparse French was *habitant* French rather than Parisian. But they were quick to understand our directions and our inquiries. We asked the Chippewa names for the necessary objects of travel; and in the course of the ten days that we were with them we managed to accumulate a vocabulary of several score native words. Mr. Brown succeeded in compounding a Chippewa rendering of the old German drinking-song 'Edete, bibete, collegiales'; and this we used to sing, altho I doubt if its meaning was apprehended by the two stalwart and skilful redskins who were propelling us forward by the untiring strokes of their paddles.

How stalwart and how skilful they were we had occasion to perceive the fourth day after we had started. We were going up a series of rapids which continued for perhaps half a mile, and which were not so severe as to force us to make a carry around them. The current was strong owing to the high water, and to avoid its full force we kept inshore.

Of course it was far too strong to be overcome by paddling; and our Indians, one in the bow and the other in the stern, were poling us up. It was difficult work, as the bottom was rocky, making it hard to place the poles so as to get a proper purchase. When we were within a hundred feet of the top of the last of the series of rapids, the pole in the hands of the Indian in the bow snapped short. Without a moment's hesitation, and before our birch could even begin to swing broadside to the current, he measured the length of the fragment in his hand with that which had been caught between the two rocks in the water. He instantly threw away the shorter piece, and thrusting his hand down into the current he gripped the longer half, and so held the canoe head on to the stream. For the second time in two years I had the Vision of Sudden Death. The Indian in the stern passed his pole to his fellow in the bow, who thrust it down and held it with one hand while with the other he pulled up his own broken end. When the Indian in the stern had possession of this abbreviated rod, the two of them cautiously contrived to get us to the nearest bank, where one of them jumped ashore and cut another pole.

The Chippewa outbreak of 1862 had taken place only seven years before, when the fighting men of the State were otherwise engaged in Virginia; and there we were for more than a week alone in the Reservation, seeing the face of no white man in those ten days, except that of the blacksmith on Platt Island, stationed there by the United States

Government for the benefit of the Indians. Him we found on our fourth day, and with him we had a brief parley. He had two Indian squaws, but he was glad of a chance to pass the time of day with men of his own race. After we left him we came to a broader body of water, and we suddenly became conscious that our canoe was not the only one in the stream. Just behind us and rapidly approaching was another, silently propelled by the paddles of four Indians. They drew abreast of us, interchanged a few sentences with the two Indians in our canoe, and then started forward and were soon lost to sight. Another day we paused for our mid-day meal at an Indian settlement of a dozen birch-bark-covered tepees — if they so be called, since they were not conical but cubical — standing about seven feet high and a dozen feet long.

After seven days of paddling and poling up-stream we made a carry of two or three miles, launching the canoe in a creek which was not more than a yard wide, but which soon broadened out into a sizable stream. By this portage we had removed ourselves from water that flowed into the St. Lawrence to water that flowed into the Mississippi; and with the current in our favor, we were not long in entering the great river itself. We had hoped to reach Crow Wing — where we could take the railroad to Minneapolis — before dark on our last day. But our Indians must have miscalculated the distance, and it was long after midnight before we were able to get out of the canoe. It was a clear night above, but a fog hung low in the surface of the

water, so that we did not think it wise to doze off. To keep ourselves awake we sang all the songs we knew, and we recited all the poetry we had ever learned. When these resources were exhausted, Hall began to repeat to us the bald text of the 'Black Crook,' a spectacle which he had seen nearly a hundred times, so that its turgid dialog had deposited itself in his memory.

The next morning we paid off our Indian companions, giving them also the canoe and the residue of our supplies. We arrived at the hotel in St. Paul three sorry-looking tramps. Fortunately, our trunks were awaiting us, and we were able to resume the garb of civilization. Two days later we left St. Paul on the steamboat *Northern Belle* to go down the Mississippi. I recall that we ran into a hurricane that evening just as twilight was settling down, and while we were going thru a rocky defile; and when I came in after years to read Huck Finn's account of the storm on the Mississippi in which he was caught, I realized at once the veracity of Mark Twain's description.

After a two days' voyage down the Mississippi we left the *Northern Belle* at Dubuque, and the next morning found us in Chicago, whence we returned to New York.

It was not that summer but another and earlier summer when I was again in peril by water, and when for the third time in my life I had the Vision of Sudden Death. I was making the trip from the Thousand Isles to Montreal, and it was a season of heavy forest-fires. Once on our way to the Thou-

sand Isles, our train had run thru blazing woods that threatened the track; and after leaving the Thousand Isles we had our horizon obscured by lowering banks of smoke. When we took on the aged Indian pilot who was to guide us thru the Lachine Rapids, the twilight was dim and murky. As a result of this failure of light, the pilot slightly swerved from his true course, and the boat crashed on a ledge of rocks when we had less than a hundred yards before we came to smooth water, and when we were in full view of the Montreal bridge. The bottom of the boat was so badly broken that it was impossible to back off and seek the channel again. So we remained there all night, trying to prevent the water from rising any higher in our shallow hold by stuffing mattresses into the breaks. In the early morning another boat came alongside and we were taken off and carried to Montreal, leaving our steamer stuck on the rocky ledge. I have been told that it was impossible to rescue her from this position, so that she had to be dismantled and her bones abandoned, to be picked by wind and wave, winter after winter.

#### IV

The rest of the summer of 1869 I spent with my parents at Newport. In the fall I returned to Columbia for my junior year, which passed uneventfully; and in the summer of 1870 we all went to Europe for three months. I had to remain behind for several weeks to take the examinations, going over by myself on the *Scotia* in time to spend the

Fourth of July in London. Arriving early in June, my father and my mother saw the season at its height; and one of their experiences deserves mention.

In the 'Recollections Grave and Gay' of Mrs. Burton Harrison, whose husband had been private secretary to Jefferson Davis, we are told that the winning of the battle of Bull Run was due to a warning sent to the Confederates by a lady living in Washington:

McDowell has certainly been ordered to advance on the 16th. R. O. G.

Mrs. G. (there is no need now to betray the name) was a lady of the highest social position in Washington; and at the outbreak of the war she was frequently able to transmit invaluable information to the Confederate authorities. In time she was discovered and sent thru the lines. She took a returning blockade-runner and went to London, where she was joined by a daughter, and where she was most warmly received in the best society of the British capital, then overwhelmingly Southern in its sympathies. She raised money for the Southern cause; she purchased quinine and other necessities; and she took passage back on another blockade-runner. Off the North Carolina coast the ship was chased by a United States vessel, and in trying to escape, it was run aground. The passengers and the crew took to the boats and tried to make a landing thru the surf. Mrs. G. fastened to her person the

gold she was bringing in; and when her boat was upset in the breakers the weight of it kept her from rising, so that she was drowned.

The daughter who had been with Mrs. G. in London was the wife of an officer in the United States army. When he was stationed at Fort Adams, his wife and my mother became intimate friends during the summers of 1868 and 1869. She gave my mother letters of introduction to some of the friends by whom her mother had been so cordially received half a dozen years earlier. And as a result of one of these letters my father and my mother went to dine one evening with Lord and Lady C. H. It was only a few weeks after the publication of Disraeli's novel of 'Lothair,' which had greatly amused my father as an almost photographic and phonographic revelation of the British aristocracy. When 'Lothair' chanced to come up in the course of his conversation with his hostess, he asked if it was true that the novelist had drawn his fictitious characters from real persons, and so closely that they could be identified.

"Indeed, he did," responded Lady C. H. "He makes no secret of it. And it is rather curious that you should have raised that question, since it happens that nearly all of the originals of 'Lothair' are gathered here to-night."

Then she called the roll of the leading figures in Disraeli's fiction, identifying each of them with one or another of the guests around the table. As my father said afterward, it gave him a strange sensation; he said he did not know whether he was dining

with the unreal characters of Disraeli's novel, or with the real characters of that other interesting work of fiction, Burke's 'Peerage.'

I did not arrive in London until after the family had gone over to Paris, and there I joined them a day or two before war was declared with Prussia. My most striking recollection of those days of nervous tension was the impressive effect of the singing of the 'Marseillaise' by bands of excited men at all hours of the day and night. Thruout the eighteen years of the shabby and shoddy Second Empire, the fiery lyric of the Revolution had been under an interdict; and it was never heard in public. But now in the need to arouse the martial ardor of the people, the ban was taken off, and the spirit of the French at once expressed itself in the soul-stirring stanzas of the 'Marseillaise,' as I had heard the spirit of the Americans a decade earlier find voice in the sledge-hammer rhythm of 'John Brown's Body.'

Shortly after the declaration of war we left Paris and made our way by devious routes to Schwalbach near Wiesbaden, where my mother took a cure. Then we went down to Switzerland. I recall that on our railroad journeys thru Germany our cars were held up more than once, and sometimes for several hours at a time, to permit the passage of trains bearing troops and supplies to the French frontier. Both at Schwalbach and at Wiesbaden we could not but notice the absence of almost every man between the ages of twenty and thirty.

In August we were comfortably settled at Vevey



for a stay of several weeks, until it became evident that the French were constantly getting the worst of the struggle, and that the Germans were steadily clearing their path toward Paris. If we meant to collect our belongings and to get across to Great Britain on our way home, we had better not delay. So we started suddenly for Paris, reaching there only a day or two before the battle of Sedan. We went to the Hotel Bristol on the corner of the Place Vendôme and the Rue Castiglione, in front of Napoleon's column. Paris was in a state of feverish unrest; mounted military messengers were constantly galloping thru the Place Vendôme; all sorts of disquieting rumors were in circulation; and even before the actual news of the surrender at Sedan had become public, there was an oppressive atmosphere of impending disaster, very different from that of a few weeks earlier, when the mob was frantically shouting: "On to Berlin!"

On that memorable Sunday, the 4th of September, when the populace first learned the full extent of the defeat which had befallen the army, we found the streets sprinkled with groups of men talking far less loudly than on any preceding day. In the morning we went to the American Church, and as we came back down the Champs Elysées we felt as tho a sudden quiet had fallen on the city. When we crossed the Place de la Concorde we could see on the other side of the river a surging mass of men surrounding the Corps Législatif. At the top of the broad flight of steps leading up to the columned portico we could make out the figure of a single speaker

in response to whose eloquence the crowd broke into shouts which came to us faintly across the bridge.

In later years, when I first saw the statue of Gambetta in the Place du Carrousel, representing him with uplifted arm in the act of proclaiming the republic, I persuaded myself — or to put it more accurately, I did not doubt — that our swift passage across the Place de la Concorde at a little after twelve on September 4th had enabled us to behold the impassioned orator at the very moment when he was declaring the downfall of the Empire. I felt quite as certain of this as that I had been a witness of the famous march of the Seventh Regiment in the first week of the Civil War. And I was as completely mistaken in the one case as in the other, since it was not until about four in the afternoon that Gambetta made the speech to the people.

Yet even if the formal pronouncement of the republic was a little delayed, we discovered when our carriage drew up before the Hotel Bristol, that the Empire had no longer any friends willing to stand up to be counted. A group at the base of the Column Vendôme was engaged in tearing down the wreaths of immortelles which had been hanging on its railings. I went out and tried to secure one as a memento of the historic day; but I was too late. When I returned to the hotel I found my father and my mother talking to the Comte de Saint-Albin, with whom they had made friends during their stay in Paris at the time of the Exposition, three years earlier. M. de Saint-Albin was the librarian of the Empress, and his sister was the wife of Achille

Jubinal, who was a learned investigator of French medieval literature, and also a senator of the Empire. Mme. Jubinal had a large collection of fans, and her brother had come by appointment to take us to visit this collection. As a devoted imperialist he was disinclined to believe the bad news from the seat of war; and he saw no reason why we should not pay the promised visit to his sister.

But when we were ushered into Mme. Jubinal's drawing-room, we found her walking to and fro and wringing her hands in the utmost distress. There had been an all-night session of the Senate; and it was now one in the afternoon, and she had had no news from her husband since the preceding morning. She did not know whether he was alive or dead. She feared that the Palace of the Senate might have been taken by assault and that the Parisian mob might have assassinated all the known supporters of the Empire. We withdrew immediately, of course, leaving brother and sister together. When we got back to the hotel there were other significant evidences of the impending change. Men came out of the fashionable shops up and down the short Rue de Castiglione with blacking brushes in their hands to besmear the golden letters of the inscription on their portals, asserting that they were patented purveyors to the Emperor, *Fournisseurs brevetés de S. M. l'Empereur*. Other men emerged on the balconies carrying hammers and crowbars, with which they wrenched off the metal coats of arms and the metal letters along the railings announcing their connection with the imperial court.

I was then only eighteen, and in my youthful Americanism I had brought with me an American flag. This I got out at once and hung to the railings of our balcony at the corner. That evening Hall, the friend who had gone with me to the Chipewa Reservation the summer before, came for me, and we made a tour of the boulevards, rendered almost impassable by the crowd; and yet, dense as this mass was, it had to part now and again to give passage to a more compact phalanx of marchers who were chanting the 'Marseillaise,' or else singing a trivial lyric of a momentary popularity, with the refrain: "*Si c'est de la canaille, eh bien, j'en suis!*" More than once we two youngsters were roughly accosted by a group of perfervid patriots, who sternly admonished us to shout for the republic. "*Eh, vous autres ! criez donc 'Vive la République !'*"

As I look back on that day of pent emotion suddenly released, I cannot deny that the Parisians revealed themselves then in a state not unfairly to be described as hysteric. And yet when I recall the condition of the streets of London on the evening when the news came of the peace which brought the Boer War to an end, I am forced to confess that the Londoners seemed to me then quite as hysteric as the Parisians had appeared thirty years earlier. The Parisians were the more excusable of the two, yet there was not much choice between them and the Londoners:

The Colonel's lady  
And Judy O'Grady  
Are sisters under their skins.

When once we knew that the Emperor had surrendered his army and that there was nothing to oppose the advance of the Germans on Paris, we made swift preparation for departure. Actually we left Paris on one of the last trains permitted to get thru to Boulogne. And after a brief stay in London we took ship for New York.

## V

In our senior year at Columbia we felt the first stirrings of the movement which in the past fifty years has transformed the curriculum of every American college. For the first time we were allowed a few rigidly restricted options; we might make a choice between Greek and the calculus, for example, and between Latin and physics. As I had amused myself in Paris as a boy with elementary electrical experiments, having possessed myself of a toy Ruhmkorf coil and a few diminutive Giesler tubes, I chose physics; and I was rewarded by the pleasure and the profit of hearing Professor Ogden N. Rood lecture on the undulatory theory, and of seeing him perform illustrative experiments. In those remote days all instruction was didactic, and no one had ever ventured to suggest that students should themselves weigh and measure in a laboratory to verify their own observations. Even in chemistry we were never permitted to touch a test-tube or a reagent with our own hands, all illustrations being in the sole charge of the professor of chemistry, Charles A. Joy. He was reported to have absorbed

all the latent and latest science of Germany, but if he had, he did not take us tyros seriously, and his attempts to prove his assertions were always a little hit-or-miss in their results. We respected Professor Rood as a true man of science, who had conducted original investigations and made contributions of his own, whereas we held Professor Joy in tolerant contempt, laughing at his most successful experiment, which we used to call the Ignition of Friction-matches on Scientific Principles.

While I still suffered under the handicap of inadequate preparation in the classics, I was not behind my classmates in the new scientific subjects which they and I approached together for the first time. Yet I was pleasantly surprised to discover that in the final ranking of the senior class for our first year, I stood in almost exactly the middle, being fifteenth out of thirty-one. Stuyvesant Fish was third, and Oscar Straus was seventh; I do not now recall the standing of two other members of the class, Robert Fulton Cutting and Henry Van Rensselaer (who turned Roman Catholic a few years later, becoming first a Paulist Father, and finally a Jesuit). How I attained even to my modest position in the middle of the class I do not now know, since I was not more diligent in study than I had been in my earlier years. Other things interested me more than the stated duties of the classroom. I was beginning to read widely and more intelligently, and in this I was aided by a list of books which my father had asked Professor Drisler to draw up for my benefit. There were a dozen or a score volumes, and

my father gave them to me at once. Fortunately, they were of various kinds, and some of them, Whitney's 'Life and Growth of Language' and Burton's 'Book-Hunter,' were not appreciated until several years later. But two of the books that I owe to Professor Drisler's kindness had an abiding influence. One of these was Matthew Arnold's 'Essays in Criticism,' and the other was Lowell's 'Among My Books,' which had only recently appeared, and which led me eagerly to acquire Lowell's later essays as rapidly as they were published. To Arnold and to Lowell I owe my initiation into the principles and the practice of criticism — an initiation aided also by a fifth volume on the list, Schlegel's 'Lectures on Dramatic Literature,' which helped to foster a more intelligent interest in the theater.

Not only was I reading more widely and more wisely, I was also writing assiduously, giving myself the practice in composition which had been denied me in college. During the week or ten days that I had spent in London after the proclamation of the French Republic I had become interested in a daily called the *Figaro*, supposed to be subsidized if not supported by Napoleon. It was edited by James Mortimer, also known as an adapter of French plays. Him I went to see, and he invited me to send him weekly or semiweekly letters on my return to New York. He even promised to pay for them, — whenever the *Figaro* should be in a condition to indulge in such a luxury, a moment which never arrived. Over these letters I toiled for hours, criticizing with juvenile self-assurance the new plays and

the new books which appeared during the following winter. I do not now understand why any editor should have printed these boyish effusions; to his London readers they could have had but little interest; but to me their value was inestimable, for in composing them as a labor of love I taught myself the trade of writing — or at least I made a beginning toward the acquisition of the difficult craft of composition. I may note here that only a few months after I became its New York correspondent the London *Figaro* shrank from a daily into a weekly, devoting itself largely to theatrical affairs, and having for its successive dramatic critics Clement Scott and William Archer.

Nor did I confine myself to prose. I had already adventured myself in verse in a few translations from Horace and from Heine. In London in that same summer I had fallen in with Frederick Locker-Lampson's unerring selection of familiar verse, 'Lyra Elegantiarum,' and this had led me to procure his own 'London Lyrics.' By the latter and by Praed's brilliant poems in the former, I had been moved to imitation. I also rimed a few parodies, and I contributed a few artificial lyrics to the moribund monthly of the Columbia undergraduates, which was pretentiously entitled *Cap and Gown*. When Oscar Straus ran for governor of New York in 1912, more than one of the biographical sketches of him which appeared in the newspapers asserted that he and I had been rivals for the post of class-poet. This was inaccurate, as his poem on 'Our Era' had been delivered at an exhibition in the



Academy of Music, known as the Students' Semi-Annual; and it was on our class-day in the early summer of 1871, I found myself set down on the program as designated to deliver the class-poem.

I have recently disinterred it and read it again after many years — with a strange resuscitation of my lost youth. Poem it was not, despite the affirmation on the program; the best that can be said for it is that it was a serried column of local allusions, tagged out with more or less ingenious rimes. And yet, poverty-stricken as it was, it served its purpose then; and its composition, like the concocting of my other experiments in verse, served another purpose — it helped me to a firmer command over the vocabulary, and made it easier for me to say what I had to say when I returned to my more natural mode of expression, plain prose. In the two-score and more years since I graduated from college I have only infrequently dropped into rime; and I have never published a volume of verse — altho my sexagenarian vanity did tempt me to collect a few of my scattered verses into a privately printed pamphlet, 'Fugitives from Justice,' presented to less than a hundred of my friends on my sixtieth birthday.

Yet I am bound to set down here the fact that when Columbia celebrated in 1886 the centenary of its reopening after the Revolutionary War, to which King's College had contributed Hamilton and Livingston, Jay and Gouverneur Morris, I received a letter from President Barnard, asking me to prepare a poem for the occasion. I appreciated the com-

pliment of the invitation; but I had learned a little wisdom in the fifteen years since I had rashly stood up in the twilight of class-day to read my straggling rimes, and so I smilingly put the temptation by and regretfully declined the proffered place of honor.

## CHAPTER VII

### ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE LAW

#### I

**W**HEN I graduated from college I was only nineteen; my father did not need me in his office; and he did want me to fit myself as fully as possible for the management of the property he expected me to control. There was then no graduate school in any American university; and therefore, if I was to continue my studies, there was practically no opportunity open to me other than that offered by a law school. I felt no attraction to the bar, and my father had not planned a legal career for me; yet it was plain to us both that an acquaintance with the law could not fail to be useful to a young man who was to inherit a fortune, and who was expected to go into politics, then as now more or less monopolized by lawyers. Accordingly, in the fall of 1871 I entered the Columbia Law School, which was then housed in a dingy dwelling in the Colonnade Row of Lafayette Place, almost opposite the Astor Library.

When in our old age we are tempted to look back longingly at the conditions of our youth, and to deplore occasional lapses from former standards, we ought not to shut our eyes to the obvious evidence of progress; this evidence is nowhere more

obvious than in the organization of our higher education. In the remote days when I began to study law, no one of the professional schools, whether of law or medicine or theology, had yet stiffened its entrance requirements to exclude applicants who had not received at least the beginnings of a liberal education. Indeed, I doubt if any of the law schools or medical schools hesitated then to admit students who had not completed a full high school course. This low standard of admission, and a correspondingly low standard for graduation may be ascribed most probably to two facts: first, that these professional schools were often only nominally attached to the colleges whose names they had borrowed, and second, that they were in many cases wholly or in part proprietary — that is, they were run for the profit of the professors. It was at the very end of the nineteenth century that the College of Physicians and Surgeons ceased to be a money-making trade-school absolutely owned by its faculty, and became an integral part of Columbia, and thereafter responsive to the loftier ideals of a true university spirit.

The Columbia Law School when I entered it was a semiproprietary institution, being the result of a partnership between the college, which lent its name, and the warden, Theodore W. Dwight, who gave his wide reputation, his unflagging energy, and his marvellous power of exposition. This partnership was profitable to the college since there were many students and only one instructor. It is true that in my second year I was permitted to listen to an in-

teresting course of lectures on medical jurisprudence given by Dr. John Ordronaux. But all other instruction was imparted by Professor Dwight himself, toiling unceasingly. The course was then limited to two years; and except for a few weeks we met no other teacher than the warden. Nor does this bare statement measure the full extent of his self-imposed burden. The two classes, junior and senior, were divided each into two sections, one meeting in the morning and the other in the afternoon — the second being intended for the benefit of the students who were giving their forenoons to practical service in law offices. This imposed upon Professor Dwight the fatiguing task of meeting before one o'clock the two morning sections, one of the juniors and one of the seniors, each in turn, and then of facing after four the afternoon sections of these two separate classes. He thus took upon himself at least twenty hours of classroom instruction, besides carrying on most efficiently the varied duties of administration.

Under these conditions it is plain that the law school did not then proffer instruction in jurisprudence intended to make its graduates masters of the whole science of law, but that it was not unfairly to be termed rather a trade-school for lawyers, designed simply to fit them to earn a living as practitioners in the courts of New York.

Professor Dwight was commonly called a great teacher. His greatness could be denied by nobody who had once sat at his feet. But, to my mind, at least, a teacher is precisely what he was not — if the

art of teaching requires that the instructor shall guide the student to work independently, to discover principles for himself, and in time to acquire the power of applying these principles to the manifold situations which may confront him. It is not unfair to say that Professor Dwight did not force us to do our own thinking. What he did was to do our thinking for us; to declare to us the principles; and to apply them himself to selected situations. His greatness lay in the marvellous sharpness with which he seized the essential principles of the law and in the masterly manner in which he elucidated them before us. His appeal was therefore mainly to our memories. For his gift of clarity no words of praise can be too high. Certainly I have never listened to any one whose skill in exposition even approached his. He was so clear, he made every successive point so acutely, that it was impossible not to follow him step by step, and to absorb day after day the fundamentals of the law. After more than twoscore years I find that I can recapture to-day not a few of the distinctions that he declared to us. But no student can put forth his whole strength when he is fed exclusively on predigested food.

There were text-books, including Blackstone's 'Commentaries,' of course, for a few pages in which we were made daily responsible, and from which we were called upon to recite. But the larger part of our instruction was derived from Professor Dwight's own lectures, upon which we took copious notes. In our second year there were moot-courts for the trial of

imaginary cases, members of the senior class being assigned as counsel on the one side or the other, and being expected to prepare the cases for trial before the warden. The examinations at the end of each of the two years were oral, each of us being called up in turn and questioned by Professor Dwight sitting alone. And when I consider the immense responsibility he had accepted, I marvel the more at his unfailing courtesy, at his constant kindness, and at the ever-present serenity of his demeanor.

## II

As I seek to interpret the dim memories of my youth, it seems to me that during my three years in college and my two years in the law school, I was overcoming the unpopularity which I recognize was mine in my early boyhood, and which lingered all thru my later school-days. I had to pay the severe penalty of being the only son of indulgent parents; and there was indisputable significance in the nickname of the "Benecia Boy" bestowed on me at Anthon's before I was ten; it testified to a displeasing pugnacity which wore away slowly at Churchill's and at Charlier's, as my undue self-assertion and my forthputting aggressiveness diminished under the attrition of association with others of my own years, who made me respect their equal rights to their own opinions.

In college I did not wait long for election to the Greek letter society in which most of my school friends were already members. And in the law

school I was one of a dozen or more who met fortnightly at each other's houses to discuss a simple supper, and also various topics more often literary than legal, altho we chose to call our society the Judge and Jury. I recall that at one of our gatherings George L. Rives climbed up into the family tree of the Warringtons, and traced for us the descent of the affiliated characters who appear generation after generation in the successive novels of Thackeray. Among the other members of the J. and J. were Hamilton Fish, who had been my roommate during my first year at Churchill's, and John Scott Laughton, who was to be my most intimate friend for several years thereafter, and in fact until he removed to Washington to take a place under the Alabama Claims Commission, kindly procured for him by Fish.

In the fall of 1871 came the exposure and the expulsion of the Tweed Ring; and to do our share before the decisive election, we organized in the law school a Young Men's Reform Association, which undertook the task of aiding Tilden in preventing plural voting. The present admirable registration law of New York had not then been passed, and to exclude repeaters from the polls it was necessary to prepare, in advance and by a house-to-house canvass, a list of those actually entitled to vote. Most of this work was turned over to paid experts; but some of it was done by the members of the Young Men's Reform Association. To me was assigned the block bounded by Broadway, Sixth Avenue, 25th and 26th Streets. I went to every house and se-



cured the names of all the males of voting age; and two of my experiences may be worthy of record.

At one residence my ring was answered by a very alert Irish girl, who was plainly puzzled by my unusual errand. I asked for the gentleman of the house. He was not at home. By this time, as a result of my earlier practice, I had managed to get well inside the main hall. I asked for the lady of the house, if she was at home. She was at home — but what did I want? I bade the servant tell her mistress that a gentleman wanted to speak to her. After more than a little demur the girl started upstairs, but when she was half-way up she turned and looked at me suspiciously. Then she came down to the hat-rack near where I was standing in the hall and took possession of an overcoat which she carried with her as she went up again, after another dubious inspection of the waiting visitor.

At another ample brownstone house the door was opened by an affable colored man. The gentleman of the house was not in. Then, as usual, I inquired for the lady of the house. The attendant answered with a little surprise at my ignorance that there was not any lady of the house. And then from the front parlor a tall man with a characteristic black mustache appeared to inquire my errand. When I had explained, he said that Mr. Ransom was not in, and that nobody slept in the house but three of the negro boys. Then I knew where I was — in one of the most famous of the fashionable gambling-houses, flourishing unmolested under the “wide-open” privileges granted by the Tammany

authorities. None the less did the black-mustached dealer summon the negro boys and tell them to give me their names.

During the summer of 1872, between my junior and senior years at the law school, I left the house which my father had taken at Tarrytown (not far from Sunnyside, where Washington Irving's nieces were still living) for a week's trip to the Thousand Isles under conditions pleasantly exciting to a boy who had lived thru the martial fervor of the Civil War. One of the largest and most beautiful of the Thousand Isles had been chosen for his summer home by George M. Pullman; and there in his spacious house he indulged in a liberal hospitality. My father's brother was a relative by marriage of Mrs. Pullman's, and in August he was invited to be a guest at Pullman's Island during the week when it was to be made memorable by a visit from General Grant, then newly nominated for his second term as President of the United States. On this occasion General Grant was to be accompanied by two other chiefs of the Union forces, General Sherman and General Sheridan. At the suggestion of my uncle, Mr. Pullman graciously included me in his invitation.

I wish that I could here set down a richer record of those three men of action, alike in their simplicity of manner and in their easiness of approach. I had a few words with each of them, but what they said, if they said anything, has faded from my recollection. What does float at the top of my memory is only a rather confused impression of my own reverent

awe as I stared at them intently whenever occasion offered — and also my juvenile interest in the locomotive headlights which had been borrowed to illuminate the tiny stage set up in a little clearing levelled amid the trees and the rocks — a clearing which served also as a dancing floor on the occasion of the ball given one night during my stay in honor of the President, and attended by the cottagers from all the islands for miles up and down the St. Lawrence.

### III

During the two years when I was supposed to be absorbing the law, I was increasingly devoted to the drama in all its theatrical manifestations. I went to the first nights of new plays and to the opening of new theaters. As an undergraduate I had been enabled (thru the kindness of James Renwick, one of the architects of the theater) to be present at the opening of Booth's; this was in 1869 — and exactly forty years thereafter I was invited to the opening of the New Theater, an enterprise even more ambitious than Edwin Booth's, and not more successful. I had also attended the first performance and the last performance of the theater managed by John Brougham, a little playhouse behind the Fifth Avenue Hotel, afterward entitled the Fifth Avenue Theater, and later rebuilt by Steele Mac-kaye as the Madison Square. As the Fifth Avenue it was managed by Augustin Daly until it was destroyed by fire; and there I saw a long sequence of interesting performances.

Daly not only loved the theater ardently, he lived for it alone; he had inexhaustible energy and immense ambition. He challenged at once the hitherto acknowledged leadership of the theater established ten years earlier by J. W. Wallack, and then more laxly controlled by Lester Wallack. Daly gathered a strong and varied company, enlisting a star like E. L. Davenport, and engaging refugees from Wallack's, including George Holland. He came in time to make a specialty of his own adaptations from contemporary Parisian plays, beginning with the 'Froufrou' of Meilhac and Halévy, made memorable to me by the appealing charm of Agnes Ethel. It was in one or another of the pieces which Daly liked to proclaim as the "Reigning Parisian Sensation" that Clara Morris displayed her uneven but indisputable power. But Daly was anxious to develop American dramatists also, and here he stood in most complete opposition to Lester Wallack (a native of New York, as it happened by chance), who in spite of all temptations to belong to other nations remained an Englishman, and who preferred a bald British adaptation of a feeble French piece to any play of American authorship. It was Daly who gave Bronson Howard his opportunity; and it was at Daly's that I attended the first night of 'Saratoga,' a highly artificial but ingeniously amusing farce, which Daly advertised as "a Comedy of Contemporaneous American Character" — this being precisely what it was not.

Daly was very catholic in his taste, eager to put on any play which pleased him, old or new, Ameri-

can or British or French. He revived the 'Good Natured Man,' for example, altho he could not have expected it to please nineteenth-century audiences in New York any better than it had originally pleased eighteenth-century audiences in London. When I came to know him in later years, I asked why he had taken down Goldsmith's unsuccessful comedy from the dusty shelf where it had reposed ever since Halleck and Drake had collaborated in riming the Croaker poems. "Oh, I did it because my brother, the judge, said he would like to see it acted," was Daly's answer. "Of course, I knew there was no money in it." This reply was perfectly characteristic; Daly wanted to make money naturally enough, for otherwise he could not have continued to give himself the pleasure of bringing out the plays which took his fancy. His likings were manifold, including tragedy as well as comedy, operetta as well as farce and melodrama.

It was at Daly's that I beheld the chirpy veteran, Charles J. Mathews, in many of his favorite pieces, especially in 'Cool as a Cucumber,' and in Planché's amusing burlesque entitled the 'Golden Fleece,' in which the brisk and voluble comedian appeared as the extraneous Chorus. It was at Daly's that I was first introduced to certain of Shakspeare's comedies, altho I had earlier seen the 'Midsummer Night's Dream' at the Olympic, with G. L. Fox as Bottom. When Mrs. Scott-Siddons appeared in America, Daly engaged her to appear as Rosalind and as Viola, supporting her fragile personality and her attenuated talent by the full strength of his

company. In fact my own memory of Mrs. Scott-Siddons as Viola is now pale and faint, while I can still recall the highly colored fun of Fanny Davenport as the rollicking Maria. "The full strength of the company" is no empty phrase when applied to the actors Daly had collected under his management, as can be evidenced by the fact that I once saw the 'School for Scandal' performed at the Fifth Avenue on an evening when the unemployed members of the organization were giving 'London Assurance' in Newark. Each of these plays calls for a large and competent cast; yet I must confess that the effect of Sheridan's masterpiece was somewhat weakened by the absence of two or three of those who were appearing elsewhere in Boucicault's falsely glittering fabrication.

Altho Shakspeare was only infrequently presented at Wallack's Theater, it was there that I first saw 'Much Ado About Nothing,' with Rose Eytinge as Beatrice and with Benedick, undertaken by Lester Wallack himself, adorned with the sweeping sable mustache which he never sacrificed even when appearing as Captain Absolute. And at Booth's I made acquaintance with 'Henry VIII,' revived so that Charlotte Cushman could repeat her most touching portrayal of Queen Katherine; and I can even now after more than twoscore years thrill again to the exquisite pathos of her "Be husband to me, heaven!" And while I was a law student I was present at the opening night of the Union Square Theater under the management of A. M. Palmer, when Agnes Ethel appeared as Agnes, the lovely

heroine of a machine-made piece which Sardou had adroitly composed especially for her, and which he subsequently revised for performance in Paris under the name of 'Andréa.' As acted at the Union Square it was a slight and sketchy play, owing all its attraction to the charming personality of Agnes Ethel herself — at least, this is a fair inference from the fact that the play never had any success except when she appeared in it. In her version the last act of the comedy-drama owed much of its effectiveness to the theatrical ingenuity of Charles Fechter, who suggested significant departures from Sardou's manuscript.

Several years earlier my father had been one of the shareholders in a theater which Fechter was afterward to manage, and which he was to call the Lyceum. It was later known as the Fourteenth Street Theater; and it was originally called the French Theater, being intended for a French company which should present a changing repertory of current and standard plays. When this experiment failed from lack of support, the house did not disavow its name; as it was taken over by "Colonel" Bateman, the husband of the authoress of an early American comedy, 'Self,' and the father of the Bateman Sisters, the elder of whom, Kate, had been triumphantly successful as Leah in Daly's adaptation of Mosenthal's 'Deborah.' Bateman imported a skilfully recruited opéra-bouffe troupe, which introduced to our public the 'Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein,' the 'Belle Hélène,' and several other of the satirically humorous fantasies that Meilhac

and Halévy had written to be set to lilting music by Offenbach. The prima donna was at first Tostée, who seemed to me in the 'Grande Duchesse' to be worthy of comparison with Schneider, whom I had seen in the part in Paris during the exposition of 1867. Tostée was followed by Paola-Marié and Irma, and later by Marie Aimée, perhaps the most accomplished of the three, with a brilliancy of fun, and also with an unexpected power of pathos displayed discreetly in Périchole's letter song, "Adieu, mon cher amant."

When Bateman took the Lyceum in London to exploit his daughter Kate, and unexpectedly to disclose the intensity of Henry Irving by producing the 'Bells,' the fascinating field of opéra-bouffe was left to the elder Grau (whose nephew, Maurice, afterward the manager of the Metropolitan Opera House, was my classmate in the Columbia Law School). His company was headed by Desclauzas, and its most profitable appearances were in 'Geneviève de Brabant,' with its immensely and absurdly popular duet for two *gens d'armes*. How it was that I was able to penetrate into the sacred precincts I cannot now explain; but I do remember that I was permitted to be present more than once at the rehearsals.

#### IV

As it happened, I had an even more intimate, altho unsuspected, relation to the Grau enterprise, because I translated the libretto of 'Chilpéric,' to be vended in the lobbies as the book of the opera.



This early appearance between the covers of a pamphlet was strictly anonymous, and I cannot fix the year of it, as my copy of the libretto, possibly the sole survivor, has not even a dated copyright notice. It must have been when I was about seventeen or eighteen.

In this specimen of unremunerated hackwork I had for a collaborator my schoolfellow, Francis S. Saltus, who was responsible for rendering the French lyrics into English rimes, and who left to me only the humbler task of turning Hervé's violently eccentric dialog into humdrum English. Probably it was Saltus, intensely enamored of all the lighter forms of music, and already resolved to write a life of Donizetti (never to be written by him), who had originally undertaken this translation of 'Chilpéric,' and who had enlisted me to help him out with the pedestrian prose, always less tempting to his feathered pen.

Quite possibly it was this anonymous translation which encouraged me to attempt an adaptation not for sale at the doors of a theater, but destined for its stage. I took a protean farce, the 'Conférences chez Beaubichon,' and I Americanized it as best I could. It had been contrived to display the versatility of a comic actor of the Variétés, and it permitted him to assume four contrasting characters in the course of a single act. When I had done the deed, and when I had got it back from the theatrical copyist, with all its stage business duly underscored in red ink, I sent it to Stuart Robson. This was a most infelicitous choice, since Robson was probably

the least varied actor it has ever been my fate to behold, owing such reputation as he had to the quaintness of his personality, unchangeable and unconcealable whatever the character might be.

Yet absurd as was my choice of a performer for the privilege of producing my borrowed playlet, it was not altogether a mistake, since the quadruple make-up to be assumed by the impersonator of the comic hero had an irresistible appeal for the actor who could never be other than himself; and a long blue playbill, preciousy preserved thru all these many years and lying before me as I write, reminds me that at the Academy of Music in Indianapolis on Friday, October 13, 1871, for the relief of the sufferers by the Chicago fire, Stuart Robson appeared in four one-act plays, the third being "a dramatic eccentricity entitled 'Very Odd' for the first time, in any city." Honesty compels me to record that it was then performed — on Friday, the 13th — for the last time in any city.

A year or two later I adapted another French piece in one act, the 'Serment d'Horace' of Henry Mürger. While I retained the ingenious construction of the brisk and bustling original, I dealt freely with the dialog, and I localized the plot, arbitrarily transferring the action from Paris to New York, as was the fashion in those distant days when the drama of the English language drew its sustenance from the French. I do not believe that 'Frank Wyldes' was ever seen on the professional stage, but as I published it in a magazine, and later in a collection of 'Comedies for Amateur Acting,' it was

speedily taken up by amateurs, who performed it again and again. It was long a favorite with the Comedy Club of New York, and Frank Wyldé was repeatedly impersonated by Evert Jansen Wendell.

These two adaptations were the natural result, first of my intense ambition to become a playwright, and second of my incessant study of the contemporary French drama. I read all the important plays produced in Paris as fast as they were published; and I pushed back my researches to the masterpieces of the romanticist movement of 1830. In fact, I read widely in the whole range of the incomparable dramatic literature of France, neglecting at that time the manifold manifestations of English imaginative energy in the Elizabethan period. From the French drama I was led to the Spanish, which I approached in French translations, as my own Spanish was but a younger brother's portion. I was taken captive by the inventive ingenuity of Lope de Vega and of Calderon. To this study I was stimulated by the appetizing little book on the Spanish drama which George Henry Lewes had made up out of his contributions to various quarterlies. Thus I was led to the more solid and stately tomes of Ticknor's monumental history of Spanish literature. Under the guidance of Schlegel I made incursions into the drama of other tongues; and in an old diary I find a prophetic entry made in February, 1873, just before I was twenty-one, solemnly recording my ambition to compose a 'History of Dramatic Literature' — a youthful project accom-

plished thirty years later, since it was in October, 1903, that I published a book on the 'Development of the Drama.'

## V

And all this time I was supposed to be studying law. I was attending the lectures regularly, and I was reading more or less assiduously the assigned pages of Blackstone. But studying was exactly what I was not doing; in fact, I did not then know what real study meant. I was still taking things easily, scraping thru the examinations partly by strenuous cramming at the last moment, and partly by sheer good luck. To me law was not a bread-and-butter profession on the mastery of which my future depended; it was only an elegant accomplishment, likely to be more or less useful to me when I should find myself in possession of a fortune. I had no vital interest in law, in fact I doubt if I had a vital interest in anything. For "society," as it is called, I had no relish, altho I "went out" more or less. I was glad always when I met a man of letters; and I recall that there came to my father's house at one time or another John Hay and Richard Grant White, and John R. Thompson (who had been Poe's successor as editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger*).

My chief interest was in books, and more especially in play-books. I browsed in my father's library; and I can recall the taking down of every successive volume of an interminable series of the British

Essayists, all the pages of which I turned with little or no profit, except in so far as I might have unconsciously absorbed lessons in style. I had ceased to write letters to the London *Figaro*; and I had begun to compose articles which I would send in turn to every one of the few American magazines then existing: the *Atlantic*, the *Galaxy*, *Harper's*, *Lippincott's*, and *Putnam's*. In *Harper's* we were all reading 'Middlemarch,' as George Eliot's leisurely analysis of English provincial life appeared month by month for two solid years. *Putnam's* was soon swallowed up by the new *Scribner's Monthly*. The *Galaxy* (which later sank below the horizon into the *Atlantic*) was then the magazine most attractive to me, with Colonel J. W. De Forest's 'Overland' for its serial, with the earlier short stories of Henry James, and with its frequent essays by Richard Grant White and Junius Henri Browne.

In spite of my devotion to the drama, my earliest literary efforts were not on theatrical themes. My browsing among books had awakened an interest in what I suppose must be called the Curiosities of Literature, since that is the title consecrated by the elder Disraeli. I rambled thru the realm of parody; I uttered 'Cursory Notes on Swearing,' and I made my first critical investigations in the field of familiar verse. I adventured myself into humorous poetry, imitating as best I could the punning stanzas of Hood, and the coruscating society verse of Praed. I had succeeded early in getting a few bits of comic copy accepted by a short-lived weekly entitled *Punchinello*, edited by Charles Dawson Shanly. It

was one of the many infelicitous attempts to mimic *Punch* or the *London Charivari* — itself, as its full title shows, originally an imitation of a Parisian paper. I believe that Shanly had been connected with two earlier efforts to transplant to America the form of *Punch* — humorous weeklies soon swept beneath the waters of oblivion. One of these was called *Mrs. Grundy*, and the other *Vanity Fair*. I discovered later that *Punchinello* owed its brief existence of a scant half-year to a fund of twenty thousand dollars, contributed equally by the two leaders of the Erie Ring, Jay Gould and Jim Fiske, and by the two leaders of the Tammany Ring, Peter B. Sweeny and Bill Tweed. This was not the only occasion when these predatory chieftains went into partnership.

While I was still at the law school my contributions to the magazines were rejected with exemplary speed. In the 'Critic' Sheridan tells us that "when they do agree on the stage their unanimity is wonderful," and equally wonderful to me then was the unanimity of editors. No matter how laboriously I might feather my essays, they were homing pigeons; and I could always count on their swift return. With the modest confidence of youth, I was but little discouraged; and while one article was vainly paying its round of visits I was already engaged upon another.

At last my two years' attendance at the law school came to an end. I was only two months more than twenty-one when I managed somehow to answer the questions put to me by Professor Dwight. After I

had passed the examination, and before the Columbia commencement at which I was to receive my diploma, I was married to Miss Ada Smith of London; and almost immediately I left America to spend my honeymoon in Europe.

We went to London and to Vienna, for the exposition. But it was in the outskirts of Paris that I had the unforgettable experience which comes only once in the life of every author. In 1870 my father had ordered a picture from Thomas Couture thru a well-known firm of picture-dealers, to whom he had paid in advance half of the price. But he had not received his painting; and in that summer of 1873 he discovered that Couture had never received any of the money. In the stress of the Franco-Prussian War, the Siege of Paris, and the disorder of the Commune, the picture-dealers had diverted to their own immediate needs the advance payment intrusted to them to transmit to the artist. Under pressure they proffered some sort of apology, and paid over the money to Couture, who had stopped work on the half-completed picture. My father naturally desired to see his purchase; and one afternoon we all went out to the painter's house in the environs. And there on a table in Couture's studio my eye discovered the pale-green covers of the *Galaxy* — the least likely of all periodicals to be displaying its verdure in the home of an artist as Gallic as Couture. It was the number for August, which I had not yet seen. I seized it, and with a thrill of unexpected joy I discovered my own name in the table of contents.

There I was, printed in the pages of a monthly magazine, and in the best of good company. While the others of our party were gazing at the painting which was the object of our visit, I looked at the magazine which at that moment had a larger importance for me; and I wondered how a number of the *Galaxy* had so mysteriously and so promptly wandered to that strange place. The explanation was as simple as that of most mysteries — a sister of Colonel Wm. C. Church, the editor of the *Galaxy*, was an art student in Couture's studio, and it was she who had left the magazine casually where I had chanced to see it.

## VI

When we had arrived in Paris in June, 1873, I found to my great regret that I was too late to see the special exhibition of books and prints and other objects of interest connected with Molière, and collected that spring to commemorate the two hundredth anniversary of his death. Six years earlier my father had bought one of the cleverest of J. L. Gérôme's painted epigrams, the 'Molière chez Louis XIV,' depicting the apocryphal breakfasting of the actor with the monarch; and perhaps it was the presence of this painting constantly before my eyes which had awakened my ambition to write a biography of Molière whenever I might feel myself less incompetent for the arduous undertaking. Altho I did prepare one brief magazine article on Molière half-a-dozen years later, and altho I did review a



host of books about him from time to time, I was not able to fulfil my wish for nearly forty years after I had first formed it in 1872, as my study of Molière's stage-craft did not get itself into print until 1910.

While we were in Paris I went frequently to the play, delighting more especially in the varied performances of the Comédie Française, but not neglecting the other theaters. For instance, one evening we had the good fortune to see an admirable performance of Sardou's amusingly ingenious 'Pattes de Mouche,' known in English as the 'Scrap of Paper,' and to be accepted as the most glittering example of his dramaturgic dexterity. The clever hero and the clever heroine, whose duel of wits supplies the essential strength which sustains the interest of the artificial comedy, were undertaken that evening by Raphael Félix and by Anais Fargueil. Félix was a brother of Rachel, and he was reputed to be a dull man in private life, altho on the stage he was a brilliant impersonator of brilliant men of the world. Sardou was the most adroit and inventive of stage-managers, and he had specially trained Fargueil to interpret his very clever leading ladies, teaching her (so he himself once told Sarcey) many of the histrionic effects which he had observed in Ristori, a past mistress of all the tricks of the trade. This evening at the Vaudeville lingers in my memory, not only because of the liveliness of the play and the perfect team-work of the cast, but also because we happened in one of the intermissions of that warm September night to have the good fortune of a

pleasant little chat with the Bancrofts (afterward Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft), who were then managing the Prince of Wales's Theater, the playhouse in London which most closely resembled the Vaudeville in Paris.

One other recollection of that summer of 1873 may deserve record. On our way back from Vienna to Paris we went to Ischl and then to Lucerne. That was the year when the rack-and-pinion railroad up the Rigi was opened to the top; and, as it chanced, the cars went up to the Kulm for the first time on July 14, the day of our ascent. We were passengers the second time the single train made the journey up; we enjoyed the marvellous panorama of ice-clad peaks unrolled before our eyes when we stood on the observation tower; and then we went back to the tiny train — only to find that every seat in the two or three cars had been taken by the sightseers who had arrived on the previous trip. It seemed as tho we should have to wait over three or four hours for the train to go down and to climb back; and this would have upset our own timetable, as we had made arrangements to leave Lucerne that afternoon.

Fortunately for us, this was the first day of the completed railroad, and not a few of those on the top of the mountain had been carried up in the earlier manner, in chairs slung on poles, and borne by two stout porters. Nowadays these outworn devices have disappeared, driven out by the railroad, which saves the traveller time and money. But on that midsummer afternoon there were a

dozen chairs ranged in a row, with their bearers eager to be hired. I engaged two of them, and I offered the porters to double their usual pay if they could get us down the mountain to the landing on the lake at Weggis in time to meet the boat which would have picked up at Vitznau the passengers on the overcrowded cars. The bearers jumped at the offer and we started off at once under the amused gaze of the occupants of the train. I bought an alpenstock, and I walked down all the steeper places, letting the porters relieve each other in carrying my wife's chair, and having them carry me only on the occasional level stretches. I doubt whether any chairs had ever been borne down the steep sides of the Rigi as rapidly as ours; and the porters earned their extra reward, getting us to the lake-side at Weggis just as the steamboat from Vitznau was drawing up to it. And I can see again the surprise in the faces of the passengers on the boat who had been passengers on the train when they perceived that the old-fashioned chairs had been swifter than the new-fangled cars.

Early in the fall we returned to New York and took a house at Orange. When we were settled there I began to go regularly to my father's office. I was twenty-one; school and college and law school were behind me, and before me a career totally unlike that which my father had planned for me, and yet far better fitted to my taste and to my capacity.

## CHAPTER VIII

### NEW YORK IN THE EARLY SEVENTIES

#### I

I HAD not been making the morning trip from Orange to New York for more than a month when I discovered there was little or nothing for me to do in my father's office, and that, in fact, I was only a fifth wheel, useless except in case of accident. Those whom I found already engaged in the work were accustomed to carry all its burdens. The only opportunities open to me were those of a supplementary office-boy, or of a more or less needless private secretary to my father.

He was not engaged in any business except the management of his own property, which consisted almost wholly of office-buildings in the immediate vicinity of the Stock Exchange. He had a few other buildings in the more mercantile part of Broadway; but most of his holdings were in the Wall Street neighborhood, and were occupied by bankers, brokers, and lawyers. The 1st of May was then the annual moving-day, and for a month or two earlier my father's advertisement proffered offices in Nos. 19 Wall Street; 55 and 57 Exchange Place; 4, 6, 11, 17, 19, 21, and 38 Broad Street; 17, 19, 34, 36, 49, and 53 New Street; and 38, 39, 40, 42, 57, 64, 66, 69, 71, 73, 78, and 80 Broadway.

This was an imposing list of buildings to belong to one man; and it was without surprise that our office was not infrequently taken to be a real-estate broker's, and that owners of other property came in to ask us to take charge of it. All these buildings owned by my father in 1873 have since been torn down to be replaced by sky-scrapers. Among them are the towering structures known as the Mills Building, the Empire Building, the Wilks Building, and the Union Trust Building; and their present rentals are several times what they were when my father was the owner of the land on which they stood.

Yet the annual returns were not insignificant even then, as his rent-roll in the year when I entered the office was more than half a million dollars. It is true that these properties were all more or less mortgaged, as my father was quite willing to pay six per cent — the customary interest on a loan in those days — in the certainty that he could put out the borrowed money to better advantage in the purchase of other buildings which in his hands would bring in ten or twenty per cent on their cost. He knew also that he could retire all his mortgages if he chose from the rentals of four or five years. But he did not so choose, as he had undertaken to complete a railroad in North Carolina; and this enterprise was fatally wrecked by the panic of 1873. My father raised money by second mortgages and by selling his works of art and his pictures (including the *Couture* and the *Gérôme*). By stretching his credit to the utmost he completed the railroad, only to find that it was little more profita-

ble as a whole than it had been as a fragment. In February, 1876, the situation was made much worse by a fire which destroyed 444 to 452 Broadway. And thus it was that in the four or five years that I remained in his office, the years that followed the panic of 1873, in which so many others were carried under, he was forced to part with all his holdings in New York, being left with only the doubtful securities of the Southern road.

Only when his property had finally departed, only when the deeds to the new purchasers had been signed, sealed, and delivered, did we realize finally that the end had come. Until the very last we had kept on hoping against hope; and we had gone thru an endless succession of fluctuations of feeling, now believing that it might be possible to pull thru somehow and then cast down suddenly by some unforeseen turn of events. Ten years after these long months of incessant and unavailing struggle, I read the 'Rise of Silas Lapham' with astonished admiration for the miraculous veracity with which Howells had represented the downfall of his hero's fortunes with its unending alternations of hope and despair, until at last he is left in no doubt as to his defeat.

In my father's case the situation was complicated by a series of intricate lawsuits; in fact, the full extent of his losses was not made clear to him until a few months before his death in 1887. He always believed himself to be richer than he was; and to the very end he had high hopes for the future whenever the tide should turn. But the tide did not turn,

for when his estate was settled we found that he was without debts, and almost without assets. In the last years he was worn by constant physical suffering, and harassed by the returning cycle of financial disappointments; but he was still stout of heart, courageous, and cheerful. When he died he was broken in health but unbroken in spirit.

It has seemed to me best to condense into these brief paragraphs the record of a long struggle, at the end of which I found myself in a totally different position from that which I occupied at the beginning. I had been educated to be an administrator of millions; and from that calling I was entirely cut off. I have often asked myself whether the loss of the wealth I had expected to inherit was for me a bane or a boon; I have wondered whether my later life would have been as rich, as varied, as happy as it has been, if I had been permitted to practise the profession of millionaire. The question is idle, I suppose; yet I cannot help believing that on the whole I have been a gainer rather than a loser as the result of the departure of my father's fortune. The possession of unearned wealth is rarely a blessing; and I think I know myself well enough to have serious doubts whether for me it might not have been a curse. Quite possibly my father's money had done everything it could for me when it gave me all the opportunities of my youth, even if I had not profited by them as I might; and when it faded away finally it left me none the worse.

## II

When I entered it my father's office was in 4 and 6 Broad Street, next to the corner of Wall Street; and a few months later it was removed to 71 Broadway, which my father had called the Empire Building. I may note that when the Sixth Avenue elevated railroad was constructed (to be opened in 1878) my uncle's cordial relations with George M. Pullman, who was largely instrumental in the building of the road, resulted in the utilization of the main hall of the Empire Building as a thorofare for the passengers who desired to get to Broadway as directly as possible. Our office overlooked the graveyard of Trinity; and I often spent my nooning in its restful placidity, sometimes alone and sometimes in company with my law-school classmate, Laughton, then a clerk in the Subtreasury. We often planned to climb the tower of Trinity to the base of the spire, but this project was constantly postponed, and never achieved at last. More than thirty years later I went up to the top of the new Empire Building, the stately sky-scraper which had replaced the shabby four-story warehouses my father had altered into offices; and when I came out on the roof I found myself level with the tip-top of the spire of Trinity, to the base of which Laughton and I had planned to climb for a view not then otherwise attainable.

In those remote days a diploma from the Columbia Law School entitled its possessor to admission to



the bar; and on application I was authorized to practise as attorney and counsellor at law. Of this privilege I never availed myself except that on two or three occasions, in the course of our interminable litigations, I appeared in court to ask for postponements. The one indisputable benefit I derived from my stay in the law school was a sincere conviction that I did not know law enough to be my own lawyer. I have never been attracted to the practice of law, even with myself as a sole client. And altho I spent four or five years in the turmoil of the stock-market, I was never lured into "taking a flier." My father's stock-broker tenants would often give him tips, and urge him to risk a little to make a large profit; but he always refused to speculate. I must have inherited his distaste for these aleatory delights, having no more desire as a young man to gamble in Wall Street than I had had as a lad to gamble at Homburg and Baden-Baden.

My father had no hesitation in venturing his money in support of his reasoned opinion as to the course of events here and abroad which would ultimately control prices; but he was emphatic in denying that this was speculating. He refused to admit that his earlier operations in cotton and in corn, in breadstuffs, and in hog-products up and down the Mississippi were fairly to be termed speculations. In his eyes a speculator was a man who did not use his brains, relying merely on brute luck. And he held it unfair to dismiss as a speculator a man who exercised his imagination to interpret the world-wide conditions which would necessarily cause the

future fall or rise of prices. This interpretative imagination my father possessed in a high degree, and conscious of its possession he enjoyed exercising it. After the Civil War was over he devoted himself to his real estate and kept out of the market; but he persevered in his analysis of the underlying conditions.

Twice only while I was in his office, and then mainly to assist me, was he moved to profit by his insight; and on both of these occasions he took me in with him. Once we bought cotton and once we bought mess-pork, and the two little ventures amply justified his foresight. He had suggested that I go in to "make my rent." I was so little carried away by the gambling spirit that I took my own profit as soon as my half of our gains equalled the sum I had to pay my landlord. I had perfect confidence in my father's judgment about going into an operation, but I was not quite so assured as to his judgment about coming out, since he was ever inclined to be oversanguine. In both of our joint operations he held on a little longer than I did; and in neither case did his return from his insight equal mine.

The rent that I made by these ventures went to landlords in New York, for we had spent only a winter in Orange. On our return to the city we boarded for a few weeks at 45 Fifth Avenue, in a house kept by a sister of Bret Harte, then in the first flush of his success in the East. He used to come to his sister's house for his letters; and to my surprise I heard her children greet him as "Uncle

Frank" — a greeting which reminded me that on his earlier title-pages he had signed himself "F. Bret Harte." Our stay in this boarding-house was but brief, as we soon took a house in East 20th Street, between Broadway and Fourth Avenue, almost opposite the modest dwelling where Colonel Roosevelt was then living as a boy. In 1877 we removed to an apartment in Stuyvesant Square. This house is recognizable in the earlier pages of Howells's 'Hazard of New Fortunes.' When we went there it already sheltered Richard Grant White, and before we moved out in 1881 it had become the home of H. C. Bunner.

I suppose that Stanford White must then have been residing with his father, but I do not recall ever having met him in the spacious hall. He and McKim and William R. Mead were all of them at one time or another in the office of H. H. Richardson, who was a tenant of my father's in 57 Broadway; and I went to Richardson's office more than once to present the monthly bill for the rent. It was in this humble capacity of rent-collector that I first met Edmund Clarence Stedman, then a member of the Stock Exchange, and also a tenant of ours.

### III

As I had no definite duties in the office, I did all sorts of odd jobs: I went to collect the rents; I re-wrote my father's letters, as his impatient handwriting had come to be difficult for those who were not used to it; and I did occasional errands. On

one of those errands to our stationers I fell into talk with the senior partner, a son of the Beadle who had published the yellow-backed Dime Novels I had devoured in boarding-school. The chief sale of this series of innocuous but exciting fiction had been among the soldiers, and its circulation waned when the million men under arms in 1865 dwindled rapidly to a scant hundred thousand. Not only did the sale fall off, but the publishers found increasing difficulty in procuring the primitive kind of tale which alone suited the simple tastes of its expectant customers. Young Beadle told me in the course of our casual talk that a stranger had recently entered his father's office with a roll of manuscript under his arm and with these words on his lips: "Mr. Beadle, you have published two hundred and fifty-three Dime Novels; I have read them all; and I think I know at last what you want. Here's a story I have written especially for you!" And as it happened this modest author's confidence was justified and his tale was promptly accepted.

Having no absorbing duties in the office, I was not diligent in attendance, and I had abundant leisure for my own writing. I continued to contribute to the *Galaxy*; and in one of my papers, entitled the 'Parody of the Period,' I quoted a scrap of rime by George W. Cable, then an unknown newspaper man in New Orleans — to his immediate delight, as this was the first occasion when anything of his had received any recognition, so he told me later when I came to have the privilege of his friendship. These earlier *Galaxy* articles seem to me now rather juvenile;

none the less was I puffed with pride when my name appeared every three or four months in the *Galaxy's* table of contents. A few years later I read Douglas Jerrold's gibe against a youthful writer who had made a premature appearance in print, to the effect that "he had taken down the shutters before he had anything to put in the shop-windows"; and I blushed with an acute perception that the British wit all unknowingly had transfixed me with his casual shaft.

I became in time an occasional contributor also to *Appleton's Journal*, edited by Oliver Bell Bunce (afterward the compiler of the monitory 'Don't'); to *Lippincott's*, then edited by John Foster Kirk, the historian; to *Leslie's Popular Monthly*, then edited by another historian, John Gilmary Shea; and to *Scribner's Monthly* (soon to become the *Century*), then edited by J. G. Holland, assisted by Richard Watson Gilder. I have kept all these early efforts at magazing; and as I run them over I note that I was slowly giving up the field of the curiosities of literature and centering my efforts more and more on topics connected with the theater. To the *Atlantic*, then edited by Howells, and to *Harper's* I did not win admission until perhaps half-a-dozen years after I had begun to contribute to the *Galaxy*. For the *International Review* (not yet taken in charge by Henry Cabot Lodge and John T. Morse) I wrote several signed book-reviews; and when I went to ask for payment from the editor — whose name I now forget — he put me off with the assertion that the contributors to his magazine re-

ceived a twofold reward: first, the signal honor of appearing in its pages, and second, an honorarium in money, the exiguity of the latter being proportioned to the altitude of the former.

The monthly magazines were not many in the years between 1871 and 1880, nor were the weeklies. The daily newspapers of New York were stronger than they had ever been before or than they have ever been since — stronger in the ability and in the character of the men who were making them. I do not think that I err in believing that metropolitan journalism touched its topmost mark in that decade. The *Evening Post* was still edited by William Cullen Bryant; it had lost John Bigelow, but it retained Parke Godwin; and it had John R. Thompson for its literary critic. The *Times* had made its triumphant exposure of the Tweed Ring, probably as notable a public service as any journal was ever able to render to its constituency. The *World* was directed by Manton Marble, and it had a literary flavor not unlike that of the Parisian papers. Ivory Chamberlain, Wm. Henry Hurlbert (who succeeded Marble as editor when the control of the paper was acquired by Jay Gould), and Montgomery Schuyler were the regular editorial writers, joined on occasion by Sidney Webster and George Ticknor Curtis. The literary and art critic was Wm. C. Brownell, and the dramatic critic was A. C. Wheeler, who signed “Nym Crinkle” (and who still revealed a certain independence of judgment that departed later). The lighter writers were Wm. L. Alden, R. H. Newell (“Orpheus C. Kerr”),

and George T. Lanigan, the author of the delicious Fables — “anywhere, anywhere out of the *World*.” The sporting editor was Major H. G. Crickmore — “Krik” — a man who won the sincere regard of all who came to know him.

Notable as was the staff of the *World*, it was not as strong or as solid as the staff of the *Tribune* when Whitelaw Reid took charge after Horace Greeley’s fatal candidacy of the presidency in 1872. Chief among the editorial writers was John Hay, who had for associates Noah Brooks, Isaac H. Bromley, and Charles T. Congdon. The literary critic was George Ripley, the founder of Brook Farm; the art critic was Clarence Cook; the musical critic was John R. G. Hassard; and the dramatic critic was William Winter. The exchange editor was Bronson Howard. The Washington correspondent was Z. L. White; the London correspondent was G. W. Smalley; and the Paris correspondent was Wm. H. Huntington. From Paris there also came fortnightly contributions from Arsène Houssaye and from Henry James. Louise Chandler Moulton wrote literary letters from Boston; E. V. Smalley reported on Western conditions; and Bayard Taylor roamed at large. Nor is this list complete, since it ought to include also E. L. Burlingame and C. C. Buel, Kate Field, and “Gail Hamilton.” Nor can omission be made also of the fact that the *Tribune* had the habit of reporting in full the more important lectures and addresses which might be made in New York, such as those by Huxley and by Tyndall.

## IV

A weekly paper occupies an anomalous position between the daily and the monthly, tending sometimes toward journalism pure and simple, and sometimes striving to attain standards more deliberately literary. In the period of which I am now writing, altho there were occasional attempts to establish American imitations of the *Saturday Review* or the *Spectator*, the more abject colonialism of twenty or thirty years earlier had been killed by the Civil War. My mother used to tell me that the one weekly which came to her father's house, and later to her own, was the *Albion*, the organ of the British who had migrated to America, a paper as exclusively insular as its title implied. It was significant of our willingness to depend upon London for literature and even for critical evolution of American authors, that the sole weekly which penetrated into cultivated circles was this which was edited by Britons for Britons, altho its circulation was mainly among Americans. No wonder is it that in the 'Fable for Critics' in 1848 Lowell had protested against the writing that

suits each whisper and motion  
To what will be thought of it over the ocean.

*Harper's Weekly*, altho originally modelled on the *Illustrated London News*, had departed widely from its prototype; its editorial page was then in the con-



trol of George William Curtis, whose political and social articles, at once graceful and forceful, were very vigorously supported by the sledge-hammer cartoons of Thomas Nast. The *Independent*, edited by Theodore Tilton, had its many readers, but as I did not happen to be among them then, I can now supply no opinion in regard to its merits. The *Round Table*, founded in 1866, and managing to exist for only a very few years, was typical of the recurring effort to reproduce the London literary and political weekly. In this decade of 1871-1880 I contributed now and again to several short-lived weeklies of lofty ambition and of inadequate capital. One of these was the *Arcadian*, edited for a little space by an Englishman, John Fraser. Another was the *Library Table*, edited by H. L. Hinton. And toward the end of the ten years I did not a little critical writing for the *American*, published weekly, not in New York, but in Philadelphia, and supported by the ample means of Wharton Barker.

In 1875 I made my first contribution to the *Nation*, then a weekly of lofty ambition and of high achievement. For the *Nation* I was to write constantly for twenty years, ceasing in 1895; and I was even a small stockholder for a little while, from 1877 to 1881, when I sold out at a slight loss. During those two decades I was responsible for the reviewing of almost every book which dealt in any way with the history of the theater, including the biographies and autobiographies of actors. There were certain other topics that I treated as books appeared, topics as varied as book-bindings, playing-cards, fans, and

in general the curiosities of literature in which I still retained my interest. As I was reading a wide selection of contemporary French books I was able to send in brief notes and longer reviews upon volumes not likely otherwise to receive any attention. I recall that my first article was on the 'Almanach des Spectacles,' while my second was a review of George Henry Lewes's most suggestive essays 'On Actors and the Art of Acting.' Altho I more than once ventured into the field of politics, I rarely strayed outside of the narrow domain of the drama, and the broader region of literature at large.

When I began to write for it the *Nation* was ten years old; it had been modelled on the London *Spectator*; and it had at last succeeded in establishing itself solidly. It paid its way; and it distributed meager dividends on the sixty thousand dollars' capital which had been raised to sustain it after an earlier enforced reorganization due to its dilapidated financial condition after its cradle struggles — after that perilous second summer which is as likely to be fatal to a journalistic bantling as to any other infant. Its circulation was printed in every issue; and in 1875 this exceeded thirteen thousand copies. During the Hayes and Tilden presidential campaign of the next year, the circulation shrank to less than half of what it had been, owing to the inability of its editor to make up his mind which of the two candidates he ought to support; and this decline was bravely recorded week by week until the figures fell below seven thousand, and then they ceased to appear.

The editor was Edwin Lawrence Godkin, who retained sole control of its political policy, delegating the management of its book-reviewing to Wendell Phillips Garrison; and it was with Garrison, therefore, that I had the most to do, altho in later years I came to know Godkin better. Garrison was a son of William Lloyd Garrison; he had been a printer; and to his fine taste and his meticulous carefulness was due the typographical integrity of the paper. He was a generous editor, winning the affectionate regard of his contributors. He often rejected articles of mine, and he occasionally made excisions in them; but he never suggested any modification of the opinions I had expressed. He had confidence in my special knowledge of the topics which I treated; and he let me say my say in my own fashion without any interference.

Godkin was a man of remarkable character and of strong personality; and I do not think that the exact nature of his public service or of his peculiar ability has been properly stated. He has been called a political thinker of marked originality; and this to my mind is exactly what he was not. He was a very clever Scotch-Irishman, who had been trained in the school of Mill and Macaulay, and who was grounded in the political economy of the Manchester school. He was clear-headed, but he was never open-minded. He seemed to many of his admirers to be an original thinker because he was able to apply to American conditions the principles he had absorbed in his youth in England. These, as it happened, were precisely the principles which needed

to be applied here in the United States in the years that followed the Civil War. Hard money, free trade, home rule, the merit system, all needed to be expounded to the American people; and Godkin expounded them with unflagging energy and unfailing felicity of illustration.

He was a born journalist, with wit at his command and with irony in abundance — altho irony is never a potent weapon of persuasion. When at last the fight was won, when we had been converted to hard money and free trade, to home rule and to the merit system, and when other problems of other kinds needed to be faced, Godkin found himself at sea. His political writing then lost much of its force; and in the later years of his life he had ceased to be a leader. He was impervious to every new idea in sociology or in statecraft; when he died he was limited to the beliefs he had held when he immigrated to America. His faith in the future failed him; he sank into a praiser of past times and a disparager of the present. He came to feel that a people that would no longer listen to his advice must be on the road to ruin; and his main regret was — as he once expressed it to an associate — that he would not live to see the fulfilment of his prophecies of evil.

The office staff of the *Nation* was small: Godkin himself, Garrison, a second writer on politics to relieve Godkin, and also a writer on literary themes. For a long period Arthur G. Sedgwick was Godkin's chief assistant as a political contributor; and at one time or another the literary critic in the office

was Howells or William C. Brownell. Most of the reviewing was then distributed to outside experts of high distinction. With the probable exception of the *Saturday Review* in its earliest days, I doubt if any weekly in our language has ever had so competent a body of reviewers. J. D. Cox, J. G. Palfrey, Francis Walker, James Russell Lowell, Thomas R. Lounsbury, Charles Eliot Norton, Henry James were all frequent contributors of criticisms upon contemporary books. The chief London correspondent was James Bryce; and the Paris correspondent was Auguste Laugel, a man of varied interests, to be remembered gratefully by all Americans because he had kept the *Revue des Deux Mondes* on the side of the Union all thru the dark days of the Civil War.

## V

Altho my contributions to the *Nation* were not important, I was proud of being permitted to stand by the side of my seniors, and to be enrolled in their goodly company. Yet this did not prohibit me from less serious associations; and when *Puck*, which had been founded by Keppler and Schwartzmann in the fall of 1876 as a German paper, began to appear also in English, under the editorship of Sidney Rosenfeld, I became one of its contributors. Rosenfeld's foremost assistant was H. C. Bunner, who succeeded him as editor shortly after I made his acquaintance. With Bunner I formed a friendship which endured unclouded until his untimely

death a little less than a score of years later. What that friendship meant to me I tried to express in an article written immediately after he died, and now included in my volume called the 'Historical Novel and Other Essays.' But it is grateful again to record the closeness of the ties which bound us together.

We were keenly interested in the same things; our tastes were acutely sympathetic, and our education and experience had fitted us for friendship. He was only two years younger than I, but he had matured earlier. At our first meeting we felt at once a sense of intimacy that ripened as we came to know each other better. We lived later in the same house; we talked over our hopes and ambitions; we read each other's manuscripts and we revised each other's proof-sheets; we wrote two short-stories in partnership; he dedicated his first book of poems to me; and I inscribed to his memory the first volume I published after his death. He was only twenty-three when I met him, and he was already master of a beautifully limpid prose style, and already a dexterous versifier, not yet aware of the deeper notes he was soon to strike both in verse and in prose.

In a paper published in the *Atlantic* not long after the demise of *Punchinello*, its editor, Charles Dawson Shanly, declared that what a comic paper needed most of all was not so much a group of occasional contributors of scintillating papers as two or three writers who could be relied upon week in and week out to supply their stint of "comic copy." By this

test Bunner was an ideal contributor, for he could elaborate the scintillating papers and he could also improvise the innumerable paragraphs, squibs, quips, local hits, which were absolutely essential to keep the paper going. There were weeks when more than half of the matter in *Puck* was provided by him — and provided easily, without any sign of strain. He combined felicity and fecundity; and he never relaxed the loyalty of his service to *Puck*, even when he had won a larger audience by his more ambitious prose and verse. The cartoons which Keppler designed were often suggested by Bunner, just as Tenniel's in *Punch* were rarely of his own invention, but indicated to him by the editorial council at the famous Wednesday dinners.

While Bunner controlled its policy, *Puck* was a comic paper which was more than a comic paper, because its editor had serious views upon the questions of the day. There was no more persuasive discussion of the tariff than that which Bunner provided on the editorial page of *Puck* after Cleveland had declared that "a condition and not a theory confronts us." No political writing on that complicated problem was ever simpler than Bunner's, nor was any more easily understandable by the casual and careless reader. There was never a hint of condescension in his manner of explaining the principles he was advocating, and he combined candor and clarity. I did not appreciate the full merit of these editorials of his until he once summoned me suddenly to write a page of them for him when he had to prepare a copy of verses to accompany the

pictorial tribute to be paid to Grant, who had just been vanquished in his brave fight with death. I did my best to recapture the appealing directness of Bunner's manner; but I could not help feeling that I had not succeeded to my own satisfaction.

My ordinary contributions to *Puck* amused me at least as much as they could have amused its readers. It was fun to write them; and for perhaps half-a-dozen years I kept on turning in comic copy both in prose and in verse. I was gratified to find in the autobiography of Mrs. Strakosch (Clara Louise Kellogg) that she recalled an anonymous triolet I had rimed about "Kellogg and Cary and Rôze," in 1878, and still more gratified to discover that she attributed it to Bunner. In the summer of 1878 when I went to Europe I sent back a sequence of letters of travel, in which I employed most of the traditional formulas of the professional manufacturers of comic copy.

As I look back over those early years of *Puck*, I can recall a host of clever articles from its various contributors, but none of them so clever as Bunner's own series, in which he projected the grotesque and yet very human personality of the professional poet, V. Hugo Dusenbury. Prose and verse of uncertain value, but always touched with the quaintness of his own personality, was provided incessantly by R. K. Munkittrick, whose signature was often supposed to be a pen-name derived from *monkey-trick*. His comic copy was often mirth-provoking, but it lacked a little of the flavor of his talk. "You know that house of mine in the country?" he said to Bun-



ner one day in an exaggeration of his habitually lugubrious manner. "Well, now I want to sell it, people don't even go by in the road — and when I didn't want to sell it, they kept coming in thru the leaks in the roof with certified checks in their hands!"

Munkittrick had shared with Bunner and me in our deep admiration for the delicate art of Austin Dobson, yet his allegiance weakened a little when he came later under the spell of Stevenson's 'Child's Garden.' As was customary with him, he expressed in verse his change of heart. I doubt whether he ever published this brief metrical criticism, and as it tenaciously clung to my memory I make bold to preserve here his invocation to the poet whose banner he was deserting:

Austin, Austin, Austin,  
 Dobby, Dobby, Dobby,  
 Altho writing verses  
 Seems to be your hobby,  
 Stevenson can take you,  
 With Messrs. Gosse and Lang  
 And knock your heads together  
 With a bang, bang, bang!

It was with Bunner that I went one Sunday afternoon in 1878 to a meeting of the Rectilinear, as a group of four poets entitled themselves, when they gathered together to listen to each other's verse. These four youthful lyrists were my schoolfellow, Francis S. Saltus; a gifted and erratic Irishman, John Moran, who was once moved to rime a real poem, his 'Ballade of Battle, Murder and Sudden

Death'; George Edgar Montgomery, who became a little later, and for a brief period only, the dramatic critic of the *New York Times*; and Edgar Fawcett, who was the oldest, the best known, and by far the ablest of the quartet. The four of them used to come together every Sunday afternoon; and now and again they invited other youthful bards to take part in their shop-talk. They all had a passion for poetry, altho their aspiration was more obvious than their inspiration; and they all took themselves very seriously, especially Fawcett.

Fawcett has to his credit several volumes of verse, two or three plays, and a dozen or a score of novels; but he was far more fecund than his few ardent admirers knew, since he supported himself by concocting sensational serials for one of the cheapest weekly story-papers. He was the most sensitive of poets, with a skin so thin that a falling rose-leaf would abrade it. He had emitted a shrill shriek when the meter of one of his earliest lyrics had been modified for the better by the editor who accepted it for the columns of the *Evening Post*, an insignificant correction due to the more delicate ear of William Cullen Bryant. Perhaps the most forcible characterization of Fawcett's unfortunate peculiarities was made in my presence by Thomas Bailey Aldrich, who knew him even better than I did, and who esteemed his poetry more highly. "Yes, Fawcett is very touchy; in fact he is so sensitive that he reminds me of a human eyeball on a gravel walk, where to remain still is impossible, and yet every movement is exquisite agony!"

I attended only one meeting of the Rectilinear. I do not know how the peace was kept between Fawcett and his brother bards. But it must have been enforced somehow, for they sometimes agreed so completely as to undertake the composition of a sonnet in collaboration. Whether they accomplished this metrical feat more than once I cannot say. That they did accomplish it once at least is positively proved by a sheet of paper in my possession, whereon (in the handwriting of Saltus) there are fourteen lines on 'Greece,' due to the conjoint muses of the quartet, the place of the missing Montgomery being taken for once by Bunner. It was to Bunner that I owed the manuscript; and he explained that the four participants had agreed on a topic; they had selected the fourteen riming words; they had distributed the quatrains and the tercets, one to each of the four — and then they had severally and simultaneously been delivered of their respective shares:

### GREECE

Land of the Gods that gave us wine and love,  
 Those greatest gifts that Fate has given to men,  
 Thy shrines in secret honored now, were then  
 Circled by maidens, wreathed with flowers above!

[JOHN MORAN.]

Oh land that memory will not weary of,  
 Deathless though poesy's consecrating pen!  
 Land in whose fadeless groves we hear again,  
 Melodious moans from Aphrodite's dove!

[EDGAR FAWCETT.]

Land where white Parthenon's tower in the blue  
Of perfect skies ! and where in woodland green,  
Ghosts of Diana flutter everywhere !

[FRANCIS S. SALTUS.]

Ever thy light these cold late days gleams through,  
We stretch our hands to thee, in faint dreams seen,  
Thou to all men, throughout all ages, fair !

[H. C. BUNNER.]

## CHAPTER IX

### PARISIAN MEMORIES

#### I

**I**N recording my trip to Europe in the summer of 1873 I omitted to set down one incident. I had already decided that I wanted to be a dramatist, and it had occurred to me that the best way to ascertain the practices of the play-maker would be to enter the studio of an experienced artist — in other words, to persuade some older playwright to collaborate with me. After more than forty years of observation and reflection upon the art of dramaturgy I am now even more strongly convinced of the inestimable advantage it is for a novice to sit at the feet of an older practitioner and thus to be initiated into the secrets of the craft. Every art has to be acquired; and whatever has to be learned can be taught, but it can be taught to advantage only by those who have themselves practised it. The apprentice painters enroll themselves in the class of an older artist; and it would never occur to any of them to seek the instruction of a mere critic. No teaching can be as intimate and as practical as that which is given unconsciously in the course of collaboration; and this truth I verified later when I had the signal privilege of composing a play in partnership with Bronson Howard.

In 1873 the most popular of Parisian playwrights was Dennery, the concocter of countless melodramas, of which perhaps the most ingeniously contrived and the most widely successful was 'Don César de Bazan.' And it was to him that I boldly resolved to address myself. I had a lot of loose hints for a Western play, to be set off with red Indians and red blood and red fire; they were the result not of my own brief acquaintance with the Chippeways, but rather were they the residuum of my reading in Edward S. Ellis's contributions to Beadle's Dime Novels. I set these stray suggestions in such order as I could, and I sought out Dennery. I was told that he occupied one of the apartments in a sumptuous edifice which he had erected near the Arc de Triomphe, and there one sunny morning in June I betook myself with my notes in my pocket, and with hope in my heart struggling against diffidence.

At the broad door of the immense house which testified to the profitableness of play-making in France, I asked the porter if M. Dennery was at home.

"Monsieur has only this moment gone out," responded the porter. "He cannot be very far." And after kindly looking toward the Champs-Élysées he added: "There he is now — just at the corner — that old gentleman with the white umbrella."

I thanked the porter and sped in pursuit of the playwright. The steps of youth were swifter than the pace of age, and I soon came abreast of Dennery, who paused courteously at my unexpected self-introduction. He was a handsome old gentleman,

with fine white hair and very clever eyes. He carried himself erect, and he wore in his buttonhole the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor which in France certifies to success.

However surprised he may have been at my unwarranted obtrusion, he listened to me with the utmost courtesy, the white umbrella shading the pair of us from the summer sunshine. I explained to him that I was a young American, most anxious for his counsel and co-operation in the composition of a piece upon an American subject. He requested me to outline the novel points of my proposed play. I did so as best I could, discovering in so doing that they seemed suddenly to lack not only novelty but value.

He heard me thru, tolerantly overlooking the blunders of my schoolboy French. Then, when I had made an end, he told me that my suggestions were interesting, very interesting. Yet the piece I was proposing belonged to a type which no longer tempted him, since he was devoting himself then to domestic dramas. "*Maintenant, je fais plutôt des drames intimes.*" And before we parted he advised me to apply to a frequent collaborator of his, Ferdinand Dugué.

Bacon tells us never to give a reason for a negative; and the reason Dennery had given me for his negative was not of the best, since the two plays he was next to produce were the 'Two Orphans,' and 'Around the World in Eighty Days,' neither of which can be properly classified as a *drame intime*.

I did not go to Ferdinand Dugué, who had orig-

inally been my third choice. I went to my second choice, Eugène Nus, one of the authors of the French originals of the once popular pieces known in English as the 'Ticket-of-Leave Man' and the 'Streets of New York.' In spite of the popularity of these plays, Nus was living in a tiny little apartment on the top floor of an old house in a side street. He also was a white-haired wearer of the Legion of Honor; and his reception of me was even more courteous than Denner's. I had half-a-dozen long talks with him, and he convinced me that there was nothing in my project for a Wild West piece. But he wondered if there were not other aspects of American life which could be made interesting to French playgoers; there was, for example, *la loi de Lynch*.

I knew as little about Lynch law as Nus could know, but I was eager to write a play about anything, and I had the unfailing confidence of youth. So it was that in the course of our several interviews my invention was stimulated, and I sketched out a situation which I still believe to be relatively new, and probably effective. This pleased Nus, and we started in to put together the skeleton of a plot with this situation as its backbone. Before we had done more than to glimpse its theatrical possibilities I had to leave Paris to take up my duties in my father's office. While collaboration is beneficial, it cannot be conducted profitably by correspondence; and altho Nus and I may have interchanged a letter or two, the skeleton of our proposed play did not take on any flesh.

In the spring of 1878, after an absence of five



years, I arrived in Paris again; and even before going to the Exposition I looked up Nus. I found that he had moved to another tiny apartment at the top of another old house in another side street. I found also when I presented myself that he did not at first recognize me, altho his memory returned when I put together again the skeleton of the plot we had begun to build. Naturally I laid most stress on the novel and effective situation I had invented.

“Ah,” said Nus a little doubtfully, “so it was you who suggested that scene?”

With prompt paternal pride I claimed it for my own.

“Ah,” said Nus again, “I had forgotten that — and I have since utilized that scene in a play that I have been writing with another collaborator.”

There seemed to me to be no need to continue the conversation further, and I withdrew. I followed the Parisian stage very carefully in those days, and I failed to find in the ensuing years any account of any play by Nus in which my situation appeared. In fact, I failed to find an account of any new piece by Nus, who was then not only an old man, but emphatically old-fashioned in his methods. His fame had faded long before his death, which took place two or three years later.

Yet, as Nus had seen fit to use my situation in a play written with another than its inventor, I felt perfectly free to utilize it myself. And I may here anticipate so far as to record that a decade or so later I joined forces with my friend, George H.

Jessop, in drafting a piece with this situation as its center. Oddly enough, our play never saw the light of the lamps; and Jessop turned it into a serial story, afterward published as a book under the title of 'Judge Lynch.'

## II

As I have not recorded my experiences with Denery and Nus in their proper chronological place in 1873, so I also failed to record in its proper place in 1867 my first interview with Coquelin. I had seen him several times at the Théâtre Français, and I was greatly taken by his engaging personality. I was then only fifteen, and I was acutely conscious of the deficiencies of my French. It occurred to me that I might get Coquelin to give me lessons. My father highly approved of this, so I looked up the address of the accomplished comedian, and rang the door-bell of his modest apartment. As it happened, he opened the door himself. I proffered my request and he declined it courteously. I was only an awkward boy, stammering a tongue which was not my own, and I had no right to suppose that Coquelin would care to teach me in the proper use of his delicately varied language.

When my sisters went to Paris in 1877 I wrote over urging them to apply to Coquelin for instruction in delivery, in *diction*, as the French call it. Their French was far better in 1877 than mine had been in 1867; and the actor was persuaded to undertake their tuition, and to impart to them the tradi-

tions of French speech as these have been preserved by the Comédie-Française.

In that winter of 1877-1878 the company of the House of Molière acquitted itself of a filial duty by publishing in a limited edition its most precious possession, the famous Register of La Grange, the day-book wherein the actor who was Molière's right-hand man in the management of the company from which the Comédie-Française is proud to claim its direct descent, had recorded the plays presented night after night, and had set down also the takings at the door. My sisters sent me this as a Christmas present, and they got Coquelin to enrich it with the signatures of his comrades, Maubant, Delaunay, and Febvre. On the same fly-leaf Coquelin had made a declaration of his own artistic faith. He transcribed a line from the 'Précieuses Ridicules,' in which he was the triumphant impersonator of the voluble and conceited Mascarille: "All that I do, I do without effort." And to this quotation he had appended: "That is not like me. C. Coquelin."

Introduced by my sisters, Coquelin and I struck up an immediate friendship which steadily strengthened with the revolving years, and which terminated only with his untimely death in 1909, when he was in the plenitude of his powers, and when he was about to undertake the 'Chantecler' of Rostand, written to display his infinite variety and very probably even suggested by his habit of signing himself "Coq." In 1878, when I made his acquaintance, his reputation was still broadening. At the Théâtre Français he shared the chief comic characters with

Got, a masterly comedian, whose power was, perhaps, more intense than Coquelin's, altho his range was far more restricted. The Comédie-Française is a commonwealth, to use the term best known on the American stage; that is to say, the leading actors are partners in the enterprise, sharing in the profits and paying wages to the performers of the less important parts. This was the system at the Globe Theater in London, under Elizabeth and James, when Shakspeare was one of the sharers; and it was the system at the Palais Royal in Paris when Molière was the chief of the company from which the Comédie-Française is lineally derived.

Altho there is also a manager of the Théâtre Français, appointed by the government and thereby becoming one of the sharers, the associated actors and actresses, the *sociétaires*, more or less manage their own affairs in town-meeting. Their engagements are for life or until retirement after a benefit and on a pension; and as they thus feel themselves at home in their own theater they have made themselves comfortable. Their greenroom, the *foyer des artistes*, is a stately hall, richly furnished and hung with the most important of the many portraits and groups of the actors and actresses of the past from Molière's day to the last years of the nineteenth century. This greenroom is nightly frequented not only by the actors themselves and by the leading authors of the varied repertory of the Théâtre Français, but also by the leading lovers of the histrionic art. And every one of the associates has his or her individual dressing-room, not a mere

cubby-hole like those assigned to transient strollers in our American theaters, but a fairly spacious room to be arranged and furnished and decorated in accord with the taste of its occupant.

Coquelin's dressing-room had two windows on the street; it was perhaps sixteen or eighteen feet square; and small as it was, it had been ingeniously divided into three, a narrow entrance hall leading into a parlor in front on the street, thus leaving a small corner alcove in which the comedian could change his costume and his make-up, secluded by curtains from the parlor wherein he might be entertaining his friends, who could continue to converse with him while he was preparing for his stage work. Now and again, in 1878 and afterward in later summers when I spent a few weeks in Paris, I would make my way up many stairs and along intricate corridors to knock at Coquelin's door. It was a pleasure merely to be in the little parlor, which so completely reflected the many-sided personality of the actor.

When I became acquainted with this reception-room its chief adornment was a series of portraits of Coquelin in his most important parts, painted by one or another of the artists who were his intimate friends. These portraits were all of the same size, panels perhaps fifteen inches in height, or a little taller; and when I first saw them they were only a dozen or so. In the course of years the collection kept on growing until at last it numbered more than a score. After Coquelin's death these panel-portraits were reproduced in colored photogravures, issued in

a portfolio and in a very limited edition, so that his friends and admirers might possess pictorial memorials of his many histrionic achievements. The interest of these portraits in character can be gauged by the fact that half-a-dozen were painted by Friant, two each by Detaille and by Madrazo, and others by Boldini, Dagnan-Bouveret, Duez, Louis Leloir and Jean Béraud.

Coquelin was an assiduous collector of pictures, appreciating with equal insight their artistic merit and their pecuniary value. In later years, when he was playing a summer engagement in London, he showed me a little Constable he had just purchased; and after dwelling on the characteristic beauty of the landscape, he added that he believed that Constables would still rise in price: "*Je crois qu'il y a encore quelque chose à faire avec les Constables.*" He had a lovely example of Millet; and on one of his visits to New York he purchased a Japanese landscape by John La Farge, pointing out to me that he had bought it on its sheer quality, and regardless of any difficulty he might have of disposing of it in Paris, where there was no assured market for American paintings.

With the young poets he was as friendly as with the young painters; and to the poets he was even more helpful, making them known by his recitation of their verses. Referring one day to the aid that Regnier had rendered to Jules Sandeau in the dramatization of 'Mlle. de la Seiglière,' he told me that he had been of similar assistance to Théodore de Banville in the improvement of the plot of 'Gringoire,'

in which he was the original and unequalled impersonator of the brave writer of dangerous ballads. When Banville read him the play, it had no more theatrical effectiveness than may be found in the poet's other pieces, in which dexterity of plotting is not conspicuous. Coquelin suggested several ingenious complications of the story likely to heighten its attractiveness on the stage. Banville turned on him with the truculent query: "Then you want me to write a play like Monsieur Scribe's?"

Now, Scribe was the abomination of desolation to all the followers of Théophile Gautier, of whom Banville was the chief.

"Yes," returned Coquelin firmly; "that is exactly what I do want you to do."

"Very well, then," Banville responded; "that is what I will do. I will rewrite this play to be like one of Scribe's!"

Probably it is due to these suggestions of the experienced actor that 'Gringoire' has had a life in the theater, not only in France but in Great Britain and the United States, far longer and far more remunerative than fell to the lot of any other of its author's attempts at play-making.

### III

Friendly as were Coquelin's relations with poets and with painters, his most intimate friend was the politician who had proclaimed the republic. Every afternoon Gambetta and Coquelin could be seen alone together in an open carriage in the Bois de

Boulogne. Nor did the actor lose his intense interest in public affairs after the sudden and untimely death of Gambetta. He became in time almost equally intimate with Waldeck-Rousseau, the chief of the cabinet which was courageous enough to undo the hideous wrong done to Dreyfus. Like the large majority of the so-called "Intellectuals," Coquelin was an ardent advocate of justice in that unfortunate affair, which almost threatened to drive France to the brink of civil war.

Interested as he was in politics, in poetry, in painting and in the fine arts generally, Coquelin never allowed any of these avocations to interfere with his vocation — acting. His integrity as an artist was beyond reproach. He brought to the art of acting extraordinary gifts, an alert personality, a keen intelligence, a supple body, a most mobile face, and a clarion voice of marvellous richness and resonance. But he never relied on the advantages bestowed by nature; he was an indefatigable worker, as untiring physically as he was mentally. He had a wider versatility than any of the other famous actors of our time and of various tongues which it has been my good fortune to see on the stage; and he had a more far-reaching ambition. Primarily, and by gift of God and by grace of good teaching, he was a comedian, the incomparable representative of the series of superb characters which Molière had created two centuries earlier for his own acting. Nothing more superbly artistic could be imagined than his *Mascarille* in the '*Precieuses Ridicules*.'

He was equally triumphant and equally artistic



in old comedies and in new comedies, in character parts, firmly grasped and delicately discriminated (like the lawyer in 'Mlle. de la Seiglière,' the old servant in 'La Joie Fait Peur,' and the braggart sot in the 'Aventurière'), in the exuberant and exaggerated highly colored profile figures of farce (like the much-married hero of the 'Surprises du Divorce' and in the ungrateful boaster of the 'Voyage de M. Perrichon'). But these comic parts, in which he was simply incomparable, reveal only a few of the many manifestations of his histrionic merits. Other aspects were displayed in the pathetic figures of the erring poet in 'Gringoire' and of the self-sacrificing cripple in the 'Luthier de Crémone'; in the fast young fellow in the 'Fourchambault,' and in the decadent duke in the 'Etrangère'; in the lustful and treacherous Scarpia in 'La Tosca,' in the devil-may-care 'Don César de Bazan,' and in the austere and severe directness of old Duval in the 'Dame aux Camélias.' He could be all things in all plays, with an infinite variety that never staled; and it was only in 'Cyrano de Bergerac,' tailor-made to his manifold talents, that he was able to reveal his many-sidedness in a single play, wherein he was by turn comic and pathetic, grotesque and lyric, artificial and sincere, burlesque and heroic.

To insist that he was incomparably the most versatile actor it has ever been my good fortune to study in a heterogeny of parts is not to suggest that he was able to divest himself of his own personality or to disguise from the spectators that he was the same Coquelin they had seen impersonate a host

of other characters. He knew better than to attempt this, and he understood his art too well to believe that it was desirable, even if attainable. No more than any other artist can the actor step off his own shadow; and no more than any other artist should he seek to do so. He must be able to assume characters not his own, and, as the phrase is, to "get into their skins" as completely as he can; but he still has to wear his own skin underneath these superimposed cuticles. It is the actor's own individuality which delights us, even when it is for the moment expressing itself as the individuality of another being. The performers who succeed in so completely concealing themselves that we do not recognize them in successive parts — if there are any such — have never held high rank on the stage; and any one of them could have accomplished the needless feat only because he was devoid of a compelling personality of his own.

Coquelin had the faculty of expressing himself most abundantly at the very moment when he was most completely impersonating a character absolutely not himself. In the course of the forty years and more that I had studied his art I saw him undertake characters of almost every type; and never did I have occasion to feel that the part might have been better played by another actor — except possibly once, when he was cast for Chamillac, the title part in a thin and false play of Octave Feuillet's. Chamillac was a straight leading man, a misunderstood hero, without wit or humor, without the solidity of reality, and Coquelin played it admirably.

Yet while there was no fault to be found with his reserve and with his dignity, I wondered whether an inferior performer, of a less constraining artistic conscience, might not have falsely made it more effective. And I did not have an opportunity to see him in the 'Juif Polonais,' known in English as the 'Bells.' He told me once that he thought Irving's performance was not in accord with the intent of the authors, Erckmann-Chatrian, who had drawn a far simpler and less tragic figure than that presented by the British actor. When I mentioned this to William Archer, who had seen both Coquelin and Irving in the part, he remarked that he thought Coquelin probably in the right in his belief, adding that in this case the play was a poor and empty thing, becoming valuable only when Irving transcended its authors' intent and lifted the character up into a loftier realm of realistic fantasy.

I did have the delight of seeing Coquelin as Tartuffe, another of the parts in which his performance was disputed — a part in which he appeared in New York, altho never in Paris, to the best of my belief. Tartuffe is the only one of Molière's chief characters which he did not devise for his own acting, composing the richly comic Orgon for himself, and casting the hypocrite to Du Croisy, also a comedian. And altho Coquelin could play the villain to perfection, as his Scarpia proved, he chose to preserve what he held to be Molière's purpose, and he represented Tartuffe as a character fundamentally comic in his egotism, his greed, his sensuality. It was a wholly satisfactory impersonation, truer to the spirit of

Molière's masterpiece than any other I have ever seen. It rose to the sinister and almost to the terrible, at the culminating moment, the marvelously unexpected turn of the traitor at the climax of the fourth act.

In his youth Coquelin had a good singing voice; and he informed me that Auber wanted him to cultivate it for light opera. But he had entered the conservatory in the class of Régnier, who early divined his possibilities and who was so afraid that Coquelin's natural endowments and unusual precocity would tempt him to neglect the hard work essential for mastery of any art, that the teacher pretended to discourage his pupil's comic bent, and forced him to study the more restrained and less exuberant character parts — a training for which Coquelin was afterward profoundly grateful. My memory of Régnier is but dim, yet I feel sure that I am right in thinking that few comedians were ever more unlike than he and Coquelin. From Régnier, however, Coquelin learned how to compose a character; and he also studied to advantage Samson, whose method Régnier did not greatly relish. Coquelin, so he explained to me, had found his profit in both of these older comedians, and made for himself a style derived partly from the two of them, and partly from his own independent observations.

He described to an inquirer his method of study. "When I have to create a part, I begin by reading the play with the greatest attention five or six times. First, I consider what position my character should occupy, on what plane in the picture I must put him.

Then I study his psychology, finding out what he thinks, what he is morally. I deduce what he ought to be physically, what will be his carriage, his manner of speaking, his gesture. These characteristics once decided, I learn the part without thinking about it further; then, when I know it, I take up my man again, and closing my eyes, I say to him: 'Recite this for me.' Then I see him delivering the speech, the sentence I asked him for; he lives, he speaks, he gesticulates before me; and then I have only to imitate him."

He used to declare that Molière, being an actor himself, made all his parts relatively easy for his actors — that is to say, his speeches lend themselves to oral delivery, they fall trippingly off the tongue, and they suggest the appropriate gestures. This, it may be noted here, is what Shakspeare also does, and Shakspeare was an actor like Molière, altho apparently far less prominent in his profession. This is what Victor Hugo did not know how to do, not being an actor, and indeed being a playwright not so much by native gift but by sheer determination, by main strength, so to speak. Coquelin discovered these defects in Hugo's method when he appeared as the Don César of 'Ruy Blas,' and this led him to refuse to undertake the Triboulet of the 'Roi s'Amuse' (which supplied the plot of the Italian 'Rigoletto,' and of the British 'Fool's Revenge').

After I had seen him in 'Ruy Blas,' Coquelin discussed Hugo's plays with me. "The parts in them," he said, "are easy enough for actors who do not really know their business. But a man who is in

the habit of playing Molière, of studying out the characters he is to impersonate, of going to the bottom of them, of turning them inside out — in a word, of mastering them, soon finds he can do nothing with Hugo's parts, because his characters are all on the surface; there is nothing beneath. Hugo is a great poet, and he scatters beautiful speeches thruout all his pieces; but the effect of these exquisite lines does not compensate the actor for the want of a living, breathing human being to personate. Failing to find the humanity in a Hugo character, the actor has to fatigue himself with extraneous effects. In *Don César* I could finally discover nothing but brilliant speeches and factitious movement. Now *Don César* has only two acts in which to appear; he has a few words only in the first and then he bears on his shoulders the whole burden of the fourth act. That fourth act exhausts me every time I play it; and in the theater I am not considered a weakling. In the '*Etourdi*' I play *Mascarille*, the most ample and the most exacting of all the parts in Molière; and I am quite as fresh at the end of the fifth act as I was at the beginning of the first. But I come out of the fourth act of '*Ruy Blas*' completely used up, having had to spend all my strength as an actor in filling the void left by the poet."

Coquelin's conversation was always interesting, partly because of his habit of seeking first principles, and partly because of the full flavor of his own individuality. He wrote as well as he talked; and he revealed his acute critical faculty in half-a-score little books in which he discussed his own calling

(‘L’Art du Comédien’), several of the leading comic characters of Molière (notably Tartuffe), and several of the contemporary poets who were his friends; especially noteworthy is his analysis of ‘Un Poète Philosophe,’ Sully-Prudhomme. Of course, he wrote well; all actors do who happen to have something to say, since they acquire unconsciously vocabulary and style from the parts which they are called upon to learn, parts composed by men who are liberal with the winged words of poetry, or who command a polished prose.

He let fall to me, by accident, a few years before his death, that certain of his friends in the Académie Française had suggested his becoming a candidate for admission to that august body of men of letters. He explained that the intimation that he might be welcomed among the Academicians had been very grateful to him, but that he was not altogether assured of the success of his candidacy should he ever propose it, since he understood that Brunetière would combat it vehemently. Slight as was Coquelin’s literary baggage, it was far weightier than that of certain other men who had recently been elected — the Duke d’Audifrey-Pasquier, for example, who was credited with spelling Academy with two c’s.

#### IV

Massing together memories not only of 1878 but of 1881 and 1883, and of other years when I happened to be in Paris for part of the summer, I must here take up my relations with other Frenchmen,

more or less connected with the theater. It was in 1878 that Coquelin showed me over the Théâtre Français and displayed to me its accumulated treasures, manuscripts, drawings and engravings, pictures and statues; and I wrote an account of all that I had seen for an American magazine. For other American magazines I prepared papers on the several Parisian playhouses, utilizing the book of Charles Nutter on the opera, and more especially the volume of Francisque Sarcey's 'Comédiens et Comédiennes' which considered the actors and actresses of the Comédie-Française. This scattered material I rearranged and amplified as best I could; and in the spring of 1880 I published it as my first book, the 'Theaters of Paris.' In gratitude to Coquelin I dedicated the little volume to him; and I rejoiced to receive in return a letter in which he declared that my appreciations were delicate and exact, adding that more than one French critic could find in my book suggestions by which they might profit. Perhaps a dedicatee could say no less; yet the vanity of the author promptly responded to this most agreeable titillation.

In the eighteen months that followed the publication of this first book I made ready a second, a study of the more important of the 'French Dramatists of the Nineteenth Century'; and this was published in the fall of 1881. Oddly enough, no French historian of dramatic literature had then undertaken to deal, in detail, with the years in which the Romanticist movement had been duly followed by the Realistic movement. I was plowing a field which



the French themselves had neglected, altho of late years it has been carefully cultivated by critic after critic. As a matter of record, I may note here that I brought out in 1890 a second edition with a consideration of the developments of the French drama which had taken place during the intervening decade; and that in 1900 a third and final edition appeared, with another added chapter carrying on the story to the end of the century. The reviews which were printed in the French and British periodicals in the months that followed the first publication of the 'French Dramatists' occasionally expressed surprise that a New Yorker should take so Parisian a point of view. Francisque Sarcey, in the friendly notice which appeared in his weekly article in the *Temps*, declared that he would "reproach the author with only one fault, altho this reproach might sound in his ear like praise: he is too Parisian." Perhaps this suggestion that I was sometimes too resolutely French in my criticism of French writers may be set off against a later assertion that I was sometimes too strenuously American in my criticism of British writers. A critic, who strives honestly to see men and things as they are, or, at least, as they appear to him in the dry light of disinterestedness, is likely now and again to be disconcerting to hasty readers resentful of any sudden jar to their prejudices.

When Sarcey said pleasant things about my 'French Dramatists,' he was only returning the compliments I had paid him in the *Nation* on his 'Comédiens et Comédiennes,' one of the most in-

teresting and suggestive books of commingled biography and criticism which it has ever been my good fortune to read. In his letter acknowledging my review Sarcey admitted that my sympathetic appreciation of his work was more than usually grateful to him since his Parisian colleagues had not been at all cordial in their reception of his collection of histrionic studies. He ended his brief note by proffering "a cordial clasp of the hand." This encouraged me in August, 1881, to see if this metaphor might not be transformed into a fact.

I had long been a regular reader of his substantial articles which appeared every Sunday afternoon in the *Temps*; and I admired intensely his abounding interest in all that related to the theater, and his marvellous understanding of the underlying principles of the twin arts of acting and play-writing. I had absorbed my first impressions of the range and power of the drama from Schlegel; but I had come to see that the ultimate value of the German's criticism was vitiated by his hostility not only to the classicist doctrines of the French, but to the French themselves, even to Molière, the greatest of comic dramatists. In a man's life, as in the history of the world, certain writings may have been of inestimable value and yet they may be superseded in time by other writings which they have helped to make possible. Even tho they form the corner-stone of the first pier of the bridge of progress, the footpath for passengers hangs so high above them that there is no need now to climb down to the water's edge just to see how they look. While

it was Schlegel who had opened my eyes, it was thru the spectacles of Sarcey that I was later to look at the stage.

Sarcey was then settled in the house in the Rue Douai, which his friend, Charles Garnier, the architect of the Opéra, had adapted for his use; and when I presented myself on the one day in the week when he was known to be accessible to all callers, I was at once shown up into the two-story studio which he had taken for his library, and which had for its most conspicuous pieces of furniture the desk at which the fecund journalist wrote his innumerable daily and weekly and monthly articles, and the legendary Red Divan which he had made almost as famous as the Red Waistcoat of Théophile Gautier.

When I recalled myself to his memory as his American correspondent he gave me the cordial grasp of the hand for which I had come; and at once he made me feel at home. He was already corpulent, and he had a correspondingly broad face, girt with grizzled hair. Thru his ample spectacles I felt his gaze of shrewd benignity fixed upon me; and I was glad that he soon recognized in his young visitor one almost as keenly interested in the theater as he was himself. In the course of that summer and of other succeeding summers I had the pleasure of climbing his stairs half-a-dozen times; and I was always greeted with the cordial clasp of the hand and with the transfixing glance which seemed to "size me up," to use our expressive Americanism. Once he retained me to the midday breakfast to which he invited all the visitors who chanced to

drop in that morning, — authors, fellow-critics, actors and actresses. Once, four or five years later, I heard him lecture, or rather talk a criticism of the book of the week, — it happened to be Maupassant's 'Bel-Ami,' which he held to be a complete misrepresentation of the facts of Parisian journalism. And on my last visit to his house, when I was taking my leave, I told him that I was about to return to New York and asked if there was anything I could do for him on the far side of the Atlantic.

"Nothing," he answered, standing at the top of the twisting staircase. "But yes! Talk about me as much as you can!" (*"Mais, si! Parlez de moi beaucoup!"*)

"That is what I am always doing," I replied. (*"C'est ce que je fais toujours."*) And his genial laugh followed me down to the door. He had his little vanities — like the rest of us. And I have diligently obeyed his parting request. I have spoken about him incessantly, in gratitude for all I acquired from his work.

## V

I had specific occasion for gratitude as a result of my first visit to him in 1881. A week earlier, in the final days of July, I had been taken by a friend to the annual competition for prizes, by the 'prentice players of the Conservatory of Music and Declamation, and I had sat for several hours hearing scene after scene from dramatists ancient and modern, presented by aspiring young actors and actresses,

of whom I now can recall by name only three, Galipaux, Garnier and Raphaël Duflos. We were in the box assigned to the Ministry of Fine Arts; and in the center of the semicircle was the wider box wherein the judges sat enthroned, Ambroise Thomas, the composer of 'Mignon' and of 'Hamlet,' presiding, surrounded by Perrin, the manager of the Théâtre Français, the younger Dumas, and Auguste Maquet, the partner of the elder Dumas in writing the 'Three Musketeers.' Three of the four professors of acting, Régnier, Delaunay and Worms, sat in a side-box; the fourth professor, Got, I failed to discover, — altho he must have been present.

In that first interview with Sarcey I happened to mention that I had been present at this conservatory competition. And he promptly told me that the prizes were to be distributed the next day, and that, as I had been so much interested by the competition, I ought not to miss seeing the awards to the successful competitors. "And it will be unusually interesting to-morrow," he added. "Got is to be decorated. He is to receive the cross of the Legion of Honor."

I responded that I should like nothing better than to be a spectator at this event, but that as an unknown stranger in a strange city, I had no chance of receiving a ticket.

"But you can have mine," he declared at once. "I can't go myself. I never miss a reception at the French Academy and to-morrow Renan is to deliver an address."

Thus assured that I was not depriving him of what to me would be a precious possession, I gladly accepted. And the next day at one I presented Sarcey's ticket at the door of the tiny theater of the Conservatory and was duly admitted. Then I found that I was privileged to be present at what was emphatically a historic occasion, for it was the first time that any actor was to be admitted to the Legion of Honor, while he was still in the active exercise of his profession. It is true that Régnier had been decorated, but only as a professor in the Conservatory and only after he retired from the stage. And in honor of the significant event, of the signal honor to be bestowed for the first time upon an actor who had not yet renounced his calling, the little hall was even more crowded than was customary, if such a suggestion is not inconceivable. The boxes blazed with the beauties of the Comédie-Française, among whom I soon singled out Jeanne Samary, with her infectious laughter and her tip-tilted nose. The excitement of the gathering was contagious and I was conscious of sympathetic thrills of doubt and hope when the Under-Secretary of Fine Arts kept us all waiting, and when I was told that this was because the old soldiers who constitute the Council of the Legion of Honor were still hostile to the idea of sharing their distinction with a mere actor.

At last, after a harassing delay, the Under-Secretary arrived and the tension was relaxed. The Prime Minister, Jules Ferry, had overruled the old fogies of the Council of the Legion of Honor. Then

Ambroise Thomas awarded the prizes to the successful pupils whom I had seen competing; and yet this won but a languid attention from the audience, who had come for an event far more exciting than this annual festival, for a reward more spectacular and absolutely unprecedented. After an interminable list had been read the Under-Secretary rose; and to the disappointment of all he began by bestowing the unimportant insignia of the absurdly named Officer of Academy upon three or four of the professors of instrumental music in the Conservatory, upon the instructor of the trombone for one, and upon the instructor of the double-bass for another.

Finally the supreme moment arrived. The Under-Secretary paused and cleared his throat. Then he raised his voice: "A still higher recompense has been reserved for M. Got—" and he could go no further, so immediate was the interruption of tumultuous applause, during which Got rose to his feet from the group on the stage which surrounded the speaker.

When there was once more comparative silence the Under-Secretary began again: "A still higher recompense has been reserved for M. Got, professor of declamation. He is made a Knight of the Legion of Honor. It is as professor in the Conservatory that M. Got obtains this high recompense for his services."

Here the Under-Secretary hesitated for a moment. The applause died down instantly. A sudden chill pervaded the atmosphere of the theater. The

whole audience wanted to see the cross bestowed on Got as a comedian and not on Got as a professor.

But the Under-Secretary of the Fine Arts was as sensitive to this drop in the temperature as I was; and he at once rose to the occasion. "Nevertheless," he went on, raising his voice only a little, but spacing his words more carefully, "nevertheless, the Government in decorating the professor of the Conservatory has not been able to forget that it is honoring also the dean of the Comédie-Française!"

Then again the applause thundered forth led by Coquelin and by Delaunay. The fair occupants of the boxes stood up and clapped their hands. Everybody was happy at last, for the almost un-hoped-for had come to pass. Got advanced to the Under-Secretary, who took the red ribbon from his own buttonhole and fastened it in Got's. Then he gave Got the accolade,—that is, he kissed him. And the triumphant ceremony was complete,—excepting only that Delaunay also embraced Got as soon as his comrade took his seat again by the side of his fellow-professors.

As soon as I could get out of the throng, I took a cab straight to the Théâtre Français, for I felt sure that if Got was to appear that evening his reception would be most cordial. By good luck I was able to get a good seat; and I had the delight of being present at a marvellously brilliant performance of the most brilliant of Molière's comedies, the 'Femmes Savantes.' Altho it was early in August and not a few of the most important actors were away on vacation, they returned loyally to



support their leader. Got himself was Tressotin, of course, Delaunay was Clitandre, Thiron was Chrysale, and Coquelin resumed for once the little part of Vadius, who appears only in a single scene. Madeleine Brohan was Philaminthe, Baretta was Henriette, Favart was Arsinoé, Jouassain was Bélise, and Dinah-Félix (the sister of Rachel) was Martine. I doubt if so many of the Associates had been seen together in a single play of Molière's since a time whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary, as the old law-phrase puts it.

I can recall now without effort the perfect comprehension of what comedy can be and ought to be displayed by Got and Coquelin in the disputation of the two pedants — that most humorous episode which is the comic analog of the tragic quarrel of Brutus and Cassius. I thought Got's rendering of the self-satisfied and self-seeking Tressotin masterly, altho he was a little hard at times, and a little rigid, as was his wont. Coquelin was subtler and suppler in Vadius; and to my astonishment he was able to quench the fire of his glance and to keep his gaze down to a dead, leaden level, never allowing a chance flash of his eyes to suggest that he was other than the character he was assuming. The accomplishment of this feat is credited also to Garrick; but till I saw Coquelin achieve it I had thought it impossible. And I was not surprised when I found Austin Dobson likening Garrick to Coquelin "with his mercurial presence and the magnetism of his impetuous ubiquity."

## VI

In the course of my summer visits to Paris I met Jules Claretie, who had succeeded Perrin as manager of the Théâtre Français; François Coppée, then the librarian of the Comédie-Française; and Georges Monval, the custodian of its archives and the compiler of an invaluable 'Chronologie Molièresque.' Monval was then editing the monthly *Moliériste*, a review which he issued for ten years, and which is a storehouse of useful material for lovers of Molière. To the number of the *Moliériste* for August, 1881, I contributed a little paper on 'Molière en Amérique,' my sole effort to compose in a tongue other than my own; and my vanity was again most agreeably titillated when the *Temps* found my essay amusing enough to fill one of its broad columns.

At the exposition of 1878 I had been greatly attracted by a special exhibition illustrating the history of the theater in France prepared under the direction of a distinguished committee of experts. The chief feature of this exhibition was a series of models of theaters and of the sets needed for a number of early French pieces. When I returned to Paris in 1881, I found that the whole collection had been deposited in the library of the Opéra, of which Charles Nutter was then the librarian. By assiduous and insidious appeals Nutter had been able to obtain for the library the wing of the new Opéra which had been intended to serve as the private reception-rooms of the deposed and

departed Emperor and Empress. Nutter most kindly made me at home in the library of the Opéra, and expounded the treasures he was guarding. The more I studied the series of models, representing sets in the successive epochs of the French stage, the more illuminative I found them. An old play seemed to start to new life when I was thus enabled to visualize its original performance.

I found myself wishing that it might be possible to do for the history of the English drama what had been done for the history of the French drama. Thirty years later this wish was realized when a dramatic museum was established at Columbia University to contain a historic sequence of models carefully chosen to make plain the differences in size and shape between the several theaters which have followed each other in the various countries possessing a living drama of their own. The scope of the collection now being gathered in New York is even broader than that begun in Paris long ago; and the American specimens have been drawn from a wider field, since the French restricted their efforts to their own drama. Yet three or four of the most impressive and most useful models in the collection of Columbia University are copies of those preserved at the Opéra in Paris.

## CHAPTER X

### CONCERNING CLUBS

#### I

ONE June evening in 1878, while I was strolling in the lobby of the Lyceum Theater, in London, during an intermission of 'Vanderdecken,' in which Henry Irving was appearing as the Flying Dutchman, Laurence Hutton came up to me and introduced himself; and thus began one of the most satisfactory friendships of my life. For friendship Hutton had a special gift. He was companionable, kindly, cheerful, unpretending; and he was greatly liked by all sorts and conditions of men. He was fond of books and familiar with writers of books. His interest was rather in the memorabilia of authorship than in the criticism of literature; and he was a specialist in the topography of the history of English literature, as he proved in his 'Literary Landmarks of London.'

His interest in the theater and in stage-history was as keen as mine; and he introduced himself to me because I had written to him several years earlier, expressing my hope that he would make a book out of the rambling reminiscences of plays and players which he was then contributing to an evening paper. He was one of the most intimate friends of Edwin Booth and of Lawrence Barrett, and when we agreed to edit in conjunction a series

of five volumes on the 'Actors and Actresses of Great Britain and the United States from the Time of David Garrick to the Present Time,' he persuaded Booth to undertake his only contribution to literature, a pair of racy and succulent papers on his father, Junius Brutus Booth, and on his father's greater rival, Edmund Kean.

Hutton and I also collaborated in editing John Bernard's 'Retrospections of America.' In reading Bernard's 'Retrospections of the Stage,' edited by his son, Bayle Bernard (the playwright who had first attempted a dramatization of 'Rip Van Winkle'), I noted that the actor had left a record of his career on the American stage; and I had written to Mrs. Bayle Bernard to inquire if these later reminiscences were in shape for publication. She had sent me the manuscript, and we found it well worth printing, more particularly because of a careful account of one of the English comedian's meetings with George Washington. We provided an introduction and notes; and we procured its publication first in a magazine and then as a book.

Hutton was a graceful writer in style and a very forcible writer in penmanship. He used a fat pen, and his calligraphy was bold and black. I once saw a postman about to cross the street to my house, and holding in his hand a letter; and even at that distance I made sure that it was from Hutton. Thomas Bailey Aldrich once complained to me that a letter of his had not been promptly answered by Hutton, adding: "But I suppose Laurence hasn't yet laid in his winter ink!"

Hutton was quite unpretending, and he had a sufficient sense of humor to take a joke on himself and to tell it with appreciation of the point which transfixed him. As a very young man he had filled for a little while a place in a wholesale produce office, which bought from the market-gardeners and sold to the grocers. As his customers were plain people he always took off his gloves at least two blocks before he reached the store. One day a farmer came in and greeted him with a question about a rival commission house. Hutton explained that they were competitors, and that, therefore, he knew little about them, but that, so far as he knew, they were gentlemen.

"That's just what I thought," replied the plain-spoken farmer. "I ain't no gentleman myself and I don't propose to do business with no gentlemen. I'll sell my goods to *you*!"

Another anecdote he used to tell against himself bore on his unfortunate inability to make his tongue obey his brain, a failing which led him on more than one occasion to make infelicitous slips. He was a friend of Helen Hunt, the author of 'Ramona' and of the Saxe Holm stories; and he went to call on her when she visited New York for the first time after her second marriage. All the way to pay his visit he kept saying to himself: "I must remember to call her Mrs. Jackson, Mrs. Jackson, Mrs. Jackson." But when she had shaken hands with him she introduced the gentleman standing by her side: "My husband." And Hutton unhesitatingly remarked: "Very glad to meet you, Mr. Hunt!"

During the serial publication of the life of Lincoln by John Hay and J. G. Nicolay, Hutton stayed a day or two at a hotel in Leamington; and there, in the smoking-room, one evening he fell into conversation with a rural dean, who, as soon as he had discovered that his fellow-guest was an American, began to talk about Lincoln. "I've been readin' those articles about Lincoln in that magazine of yours, very interestin', very interestin', indeed. Have you read them?" Hutton admitted their perusal. "Then perhaps you will agree with me," returned the English clergyman; "I'm inclined to believe that that man Lincoln must have been the most remarkable nigger that ever lived. Don't you think so?" And altho Hutton spent the better part of the evening in trying to persuade his friendly companion that the author of the Gettysburg address had been born free and white, his explanations failed to carry conviction. When Hutton told me this, I was moved to cap it with a story told by my father about another English clergyman who maintained that our Civil War was absurd. "You have only to look at a map and see how narrow the isthmus is that unites them to see that God didn't mean North and South America to be under the same government." Taken together these two anecdotes tend to confirm Charles Dudley Warner's assertion that there must be schools in England where they teach ignorance of America.

Once when Hutton and I returned to America on the same boat we had for a fellow-passenger a blatant man who made his abhorrent personality

obtrusively offensive in the smoking-room. He raised his raucous voice in frequent self-laudation; he gave himself out as a Scotsman, a sailor, a great traveller, a seer of strange sights. After an unusually protracted revelation of his peculiarities, this person left the smoking-room one afternoon banging the door after him, and a hush fell upon the crowd. Hutton waited a moment, and then addressing me, but raising his voice a little so that it carried, he remarked: "I have no desire to say anything against the gentleman who has just left us — but he is not a Scotchman as he says he is. He says *Edinburg*." Whereupon a quiet little man in a far corner looked up from his game of patience and contributed this: "He ain't no sailor, neither. He spits to windward!" And then silence again enveloped us.

It was early in the eighties that the Tile Club was founded by a group of illustrators. It held its meetings in a back building in Tenth Street — the same house where Hopkinson Smith laid the scene of 'Colonel Carter of Cartersville.' Elihu Vedder, altho a resident of Rome, had been elected to the Tile Club; but, as it happened, he was not able to be present at any of its gatherings until he came to one which Hutton attended as the guest of Stanford White. When Vedder entered the outer room, it chanced that Hutton and White and Arthur B. Frost were seated side by side on a settee; and all three of them were then tall men, with reddish hair and full, drooping, reddish mustaches. Now, Vedder was at that time also a tall man with reddish hair and a full, drooping, reddish mustache. When he



came in, he paused in front of the settee on which were sitting the three men who looked more or less like each other and like him. He knew White and Hutton very well, but Frost he did not know. He glanced at them for a moment and they returned his gaze in silence. Then he went to the mantelpiece and took down a little mirror, and turned back to the settee. He solemnly compared his own face in the looking-glass, first with White's, then with Frost's and finally with Hutton's. This done to his satisfaction, he stepped up to Frost and held out his hand saying, "Here's another chimpanzee to make up your quartet."

## II

In 1885, Hutton and I joined forces with half-a-dozen others equally interested in the history of the American stage and established the Dunlap Society to print books relating to the theater in the United States. We named our book club after William Dunlap, the earliest of our professional playwrights. I was elected secretary, and with the loyal assistance of Hutton I got out a dozen volumes in the course of the next half-dozen years. I provided introductions for two plays, Dunlap's 'André' and Burk's 'Battle of Bunker Hill'; and Hutton made two collections of poetic addresses delivered in American theaters in the course of the preceding century. After a trance of several years the Dunlap Society was revived in 1900 with Douglas Taylor as president; and it issued a second series of publica-

tions. Then it entered on another stage of suspended animation until 1914, when it was again resuscitated and I was elected president with the definite understanding that the position was to be absolutely honorary.

With Hutton again I took part in founding another organization. There was then in New York no distinctively literary club, altho many of the older authors were members of the Century Association. It occurred to Charles de Kay that it might be possible to gather together the men of letters residing in or near New York; and on a call from him seven of us met on October 21, 1882, at the house of his brother-in-law, Richard Watson Gilder — a very picturesque residence in Fifteenth Street just east of Union Square, a dwelling transmogrified from a commodious stable. Then and there we seven — De Kay, Gilder, Edward Eggleston, Noah Brooks, Edmund Clarence Stedman, Hutton and I — agreed to organize the Authors Club. At a second meeting, held a week later at Stedman's, other men of letters were present by invitation; and a committee was appointed to draft a constitution. And at a third meeting, held at Hutton's, this constitution was formally accepted.

It was only by the exercise of remarkable prevision that the early members were able to avert immediate discord and imminent disruption, as there were at least two of the twenty-five organizing members who aspired to the signal honor of being the first president of the new club. This difficulty was evaded by the simple device of not having a president and of

confiding the government of the association to an executive council which was to elect its own chairman.

For the first year or two the Authors Club held its meetings here and there, sometimes at the houses of different members and sometimes at restaurants. After a while it accepted the hospitality of the Tile Club; and a year or two later it engaged quarters of its own. It elected Matthew Arnold as its first honorary member; and to him, when he came to America, in 1883, to lecture, it gave its first reception.

From its earliest meetings the Authors Club justified the hopes of its founders; and for the first time in the history of New York the members of the writing craft were able to get acquainted with each other. We soon discovered that we were far more in number than any of us had supposed; and authors who survived their earlier fame were called back to mingle with their younger successors. Once or twice the shy and elusive Herman Melville dropped in for an hour or two. Indeed, it was one of the chief advantages of the new club that it permitted the conscripts of authorship to associate with the veterans of the calling. Not a few of the men of letters domiciled in other parts of the country accepted non-resident membership and intermittently took part in our gatherings.

Of course, we were prone to talk shop at our fortnightly reunions, and to break into little groups to exchange experiences. Authors and editors met informally as fellow-members and they welcomed now and again the publishers, even making them members when they happened to have written a book or two.

Two of the anecdotes told to me at one or another of these earlier gatherings recur to me now as I am jotting down these recollections. Who it was that imparted the first of them I do not now remember, tho the story itself has clung to my memory. It related to the earlier days of *Scribner's Monthly* and to Charles Kingsley's brief stay in New York. To meet the British visitor Dr. J. G. Holland invited every one who had ever contributed to *Scribner's*. One of these invitations went to an elderly maiden lady in a remote New England village, a few of her unpretending lyrics having been printed once upon a time in the pages of the magazine. She held it a duty to accept the editorial command; and she made her first trip to the metropolis. Of course, she knew no one of those who gathered to do honor to Kingsley; and she sat by herself in a modest corner. There she was spied by Roswell Smith, the kindly publisher of the magazine, and he had pity on her solitude amid the throng. He introduced himself and told her who the different guests were, delighting her by enabling her to see in the flesh the writers she had met before only in print. Finally he asked her to go with him into the dining-room for a croquette or an ice cream. She hesitated for a moment and then confessed frankly: "I'd like to, but I don't know that I ought. You see, I have a ticket for the entertainment, but I'm not sure whether it includes refreshments."

The other tale was told me by S. S. Conant, only a few weeks before he vanished absolutely from off the face of the earth without leaving any clue; and

to this day no light has ever been thrown on the mystery of his disappearance. At the time of this last talk with him he was the managing editor of *Harper's Weekly* and he had only recently received from E. A. Abbey a double-page drawing depicting the expulsion of the Quakers from Massachusetts. Conant had at once written to Whittier, asking him for a poem to accompany the picture; and the Quaker had declined, explaining that he had already treated the theme and did not feel that he could add anything to what he had once said. But Conant was not discouraged, and when the drawing was engraved on wood he sent Whittier a proof of the cut, in the hope that the poet might be moved to reconsider his refusal. Within a week his faith was justified, and he received a pair of sonnets which the sight of Abbey's beautiful print had evoked. Accompanying them was a letter in which the simple-minded poet requested two hundred dollars in payment, adding that "if thee cannot give so much, thee will please return them to me, as I can get that sum nearer home," — meaning, no doubt, from the *Atlantic*. The editor promptly put the sonnets in type and sent a proof to Whittier with a check for the desired amount. When the proof was returned, Conant found that Whittier had intercalated a third sonnet between the other two.

"Did you send him another hundred dollars?" I inquired, being always anxious that the laborer should reap his reward.

"No," responded Conant, smiling. "I thought he could ask for it, if he expected it."

## III

One immediate result of the founding of the Authors Club and of the opportunity it afforded us to rub elbows and to develop a solidarity among the men of letters in New York, and in its immediate vicinity, was the organization of the American Copyright League — which came to be known later as the Authors League in contradistinction to a corresponding League soon to be formed by the publishers. The original members of the Copyright League were all members of the Authors Club; and I believe that it was at the meetings of the Club that the establishment of the League was first broached.

Many efforts had been made in the past to arouse public opinion in behalf of foreign writers, who were almost wholly without any protection under our laws; but these efforts had been unavailing. The situation of our literature under these circumstances was increasingly unsatisfactory. Not only were we taking without payment the writings of British and French and German men of letters, but our own men of letters had to vend their wares in competition with these stolen goods — which was most discouraging to the riper development of the American branch of English literature and also most unsettling to the book-trade, upon which the expansion of literature is nowadays necessarily dependent. And the American authors had another grievous disability, since it was unfair to expect that foreign nations

would be generous enough to extend the full protection of their legislation to Americans so long as we refused any protection to their own writers.

The first meeting of the American Copyright League was held at my house, 121 East 18th Street, on April 16, 1883. The first of the authors to arrive was Henry James, whom I had then the pleasure of meeting for the first time. The second meeting took place a little later at Hutton's; and in a few weeks we had collected adherents all over the country. We organized for a long campaign, resolved not to quit until we had accomplished our purpose; in fact, as a matter of record it may be set down here that it was more than eight years before we could rejoice over the passage of the first act recognizing the obligation of the American people toward the foreign men of letters who were amusing and enlightening us. Our ultimate victory was due largely to the zeal and the tact of our successive secretaries, George Parsons Lathrop, Henry Loomis Nelson, and Robert Underwood Johnson. It was due also to the invaluable assistance of our allies among publishers.

We chose a strong and energetic executive committee, and James Russell Lowell accepted the presidency, contributing the quatrain which we adopted as our motto:

In vain we call old notions fudge,  
And bend our conscience to our dealing;  
The ten commandments will not budge  
And stealing will continue stealing.

Hutton and I were both members of the executive committee; and I was soon made chairman of a subcommittee on publicity. For several months I had to provide for a syndicate of friendly newspapers a daily paragraph, calculated to arouse the interest of the unthinking public in our cause. These paragraphs were extracted from the addresses and the articles and the letters of our supporters; and they tended to arouse a current of interest in our behalf among those who had hitherto paid no attention to the subject.

It was the experience gained in this agitation for international copyright which first called my attention to the fact that in advocacy of any movement in advance there is no need to waste time in controversy with its antagonists. A determined opponent who has once begun to argue on his own side can never be converted. Of course, his arguments must be met and answered, but with no hope of affecting his views; and this response must be as brief as may be. It is to the public at large that all argument must be addressed—the public which may be assumed to know nothing at all about the facts of the case and to care less. This immense majority is never hostile; it is only totally ignorant of the situation and profoundly uninterested. And since the public is without knowledge, argument is not needed so much as information. Once put the average man in possession of the facts, and these facts speak for themselves; they will convert him, if he will only pause long enough to take them in. He pays little attention to protracted discussion be-



tween those in favor of a reform and those opposed to it; and he is inclined to smile at their vehemence. But catch him off his guard and appeal to his common sense by an understatement of the situation and he soon sees for himself the necessity of the action urged. In fact, if the situation can be understated so moderately that he is tempted to restate it himself more effectively, then he is already won over, and he can be relied on to go forth and make converts to the cause he has unwittingly made his own.

As chairman of the committee on publicity I wrote several appeals to the average man, always avoiding vehemence and violence and always striving to supply information which the mind of the average man could readily apprehend and upon which it could react. Three of these contributions of mine may be mentioned here. The last of them was a perfectly colorless account of the slow evolutions of copyright, national and international, from the first granting by Venice, shortly after the invention of printing, of an exclusive privilege to one of its citizens, protecting for seven years his edition of Cicero's letters, a protection which could not extend beyond the boundaries of the Venetian republic. In the legal aspects of this historical sketch, I was aided by Professor Monroe Smith, my colleague on the executive committee, who printed my paper in the *Political Science Quarterly*, of which he was the editor. When it appeared I sent it to Theodore Roosevelt, also a member of the League, and he gave it at once to Thomas B. Reed, then Speaker of the House of Representatives. Reed was an intimate

friend of Roosevelt and of Henry Cabot Lodge and was in the habit of chaffing them about their interest in the international copyright, which he carelessly dismissed as a fad of the mugwumps. And it was upon Reed's good-will that we had to depend for the granting of a day, at the close of the session of 1891, for the passage of our bill in the House, it having already passed the Senate. My paper showed that the United States then lagged far behind all the other countries of the world, very far behind the Latin-American republics, for example; and my sole suggestion at the end was that the time had come when we ought to resume our former position at the head of the procession of nations. This unadorned statement of our position converted Reed, for the next morning he told Roosevelt that we could have a day for our bill whenever we wanted it. The act was passed; and on the 1st of July, 1891, we took our first step in advance. In the years that have followed, the ground then won has been retained and even extended by successive amendments to the law.

Two of the other articles I wrote were revised and issued as pamphlets by the League, 'Cheap Books and Good Books' in 1888, and 'American Authors and British Pirates' in 1889. The first of these was an analysis of the plea put forward by our opponents that the granting of international copyright would deprive the reading public of the United States of cheap books. I had no difficulty in showing that the only books made cheaper by the absence of international copyright were con-

temporary British novels, forced into an artificial circulation by half-a-dozen rival reprinters, and I pointed out that this artificial stimulation of a demand for the poorer sort of British fiction was not a good thing in itself. I collected illustrations to show that in foreign countries, especially in France and in Germany, where there was no artificially created plethora of imported fiction, the demand for cheap books was met by various series of standard works of a value approved by time, and to be procured at a price even lower than that for which the borrowed British novels were to be had in the United States. I ventured the prediction that, when the flood of imported and inferior fiction should be cut off, American publishers would gladly meet the demand for cheap books, supplying it with writings of a more enduring worth. And now that we have had international copyright for a quarter of a century and that the practice of piracy has been given up, it is a satisfaction to see that this prophecy has been fulfilled and that the cheapest books are now the books best worth having.

I was moved to prepare the other pamphlet on 'American Authors and British Pirates' by my disgust at the assertion often made by our own supporters that the book-piracy was our national sin, with the implication that it was a sin from which other peoples were free. This assertion also appeared frequently in the British papers, our kin across the sea — a little more than kin and less than kind — being so acutely conscious of the beam in our eye that they were serenely unconscious of

the mote in their own. It is a fact, of course, that far more British books were pirated in America than American books in England; but this was largely because there were far more British books than there were American. I found it easy enough to show that several London publishers made a practice of pirating every American book likely to appeal to their constituency — ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin,’ ‘Ben Hur,’ Miss Alcott’s juvenile tales and the varied writings of our laughing philosophers, Artemus Ward, Josh Billings, and Mark Twain. And altho there was less piracy in England, what there was had offensive features rarely observable in American reprints of British books, for the British pirates were sometimes moved to mutilate their spoil in an effort to accommodate it to insular taste.

It is only fair, however, to note that the British law was a little better than ours, since it did afford occasional protection to certain American writers; that is to say, if one of our better-known men of letters could arrange for simultaneous publication in London and in New York, and if he could manage to be under the British flag on the day of issue, in Canada or in Bermuda, then he was secure from piracy in the British Empire. But, of course, this device, besides being expensive and troublesome, protected only the writer of recognized popularity who could make sure of simultaneous publication; and it left without any protection an author’s first successful book — ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin,’ for example, or the ‘Innocents Abroad.’

Yet because it did protect the writer of ascer-

tained position, Mark Twain was perfectly satisfied with it; and when my paper on 'American Authors and British Pirates' originally appeared in the *New Princeton Review*, Mark fell foul of it at once in a very characteristic and very amusing letter. In my rejoinder I admitted that, altho the British law protected him with his international fame, it left the novice absolutely without any control over his own work. In this reply I was studiously courteous, refraining from any retort in kind to Mark's humorous personalities. Nevertheless Mark took offense and for a year or two he seemed to avoid me. Like most humorists, he was inclined to take himself seriously and to be more or less deficient in the negative sense-of-humor which often fails to accompany the more positive humor.

#### IV

For *Scribner's Monthly* I had prepared a paper on the 'Actors and Actresses of New York,' for which most of the illustrations were drawn by E. A. Abbey, with whom I soon formed a friendship. With his customary kindness he offered to design a book-plate for me, if I could supply an idea for his pictorial treatment. I suggested that as I was an American interested in the drama he might portray an Indian gazing at a Greek comic mask. Abbey accepted this at once as a promising motive. "But where can I get a Greek mask?" he inquired. I lifted up my cuff and showed him one of a pair of gold sleeve-buttons, in the shape of a comic and

a tragic mask — adornments which I had bought from a Parisian jeweler three days after the battle of Sedan. A few days later when he handed me his charming design, I inquired in my turn: "But where did you get your Indian?" And he answered: "I posed an Irishman for that. You know, Irishmen make thundering good Indians." Then he demanded an appropriate motto to encircle his drawing; and I took down my Molière, finding at last in the 'Critique de l'École des Femmes' a line which seemed like a prophetic anticipation of the design: "What do you think of this comedy?" (*"Que pensez-vous de cette comédie?"*)

Either thru Abbey or thru Hutton I got acquainted about this time with Francis D. Millet and with Lawrence Barrett; and we four came in time to discuss the starting of an informal club, to consist of practitioners of the allied arts, writers, painters, actors, who could dine or sup or lunch together intermittently, in New York in the winter, and in London in the summer, when we might happen to meet on the far side of the Atlantic. To make a start, I invited Abbey, Barrett, Hutton, Millet and W. M. Laffan to dine with me at the Florence House, then on the corner of Fourth Avenue and 18th Street. This was on April 3, 1882; and we then and there decided to call ourselves The Kinsmen.

It was not until a year later that we met again at dinner (in March, 1883) at Hutton's, when we welcomed to our ranks Bunner and James R. Osgood, Vedder and Mark Twain. In the summer of 1883,

we had a third meeting in London, at which we admitted George H. Boughton and Clarence King, and also half-a-dozen of our British friends, Andrew Lang and Austin Dobson, Comyns Carr and Edmund Gosse, Alfred Parsons and Linley Sambourne; and for the bill-of-fare Abbey sketched a plate representing Brother Jonathan shaking hands with John Bull. (One of our later London bills-of-fare, I may here note, had for its head-piece a composite pen-and-ink sketch by Abbey, Boughton, Parsons and Sambourne.) In the fall of that year another gathering took place at the Shakspeare Inn at Stratford; and then William Black was adjoined to us; and in New York a month later we had a luncheon to admit Joseph Jefferson and Henry Irving, Richard Watson Gilder and George Parsons Lathrop. Thereafter, sometimes in London and sometimes in New York, we met at irregular intervals, slowly swelling our American membership by the admission of William Dean Howells, R. Swain Gifford, John Ames Mitchell, Charles Dudley Warner, and Thomas Bailey Aldrich. Unfortunately there was an unpleasant misunderstanding in connection with a New York dinner in 1887; and as a result of this the American branch of The Kinsmen never had another meeting.

There was no dissolution, but its members lost their interest in the club and it simply ceased to be. When the American members chanced to be in London they foregathered with the British members; and to this day the British branch is still flourishing after an existence of more than thirty years. It

recognizes its American origin by making the American Ambassador an *ex-officio* member, and by sending over its signed bills-of-fare to the sole survivor of its six founders. It is pleasant for that survivor here to express his belief that our modest international organization may have done its share in cultivating a better understanding between the exponents of the kindred arts in the two branches of the English-speaking peoples. No more congenial body of men ever came together in London or in New York; and the memory of our meetings is a permanent possession.

Especially pleasant to me is the fact that the founding of The Kinsmen consolidated my friendship with Frank Millet, a man of varied accomplishments and of unfailing attractiveness. A drummer boy in the Civil War, a correspondent decorated by the Czar for bravery under fire, a writer of short-stories of weird ingenuity (witness 'Yatil' and the 'Fourth Waits'), a painter of high ambition, an administrator of admirable sagacity, he was always simple, unaffected, friendly, and companionable. Of him it could truly be said that "none knew him but to love him, none named him but to praise." He had solidity of character, cheerfulness and courage; and when his friends first had news of the disaster of the *Titanic* they never doubted that so long as there was one woman or one child in danger, Frank Millet would go down with the ship.

His immense experience in all parts of the world, his unflagging interest in life, his felicity of speech, made him welcome in any circle. Altho he was in



no way a professed wit, his conversation was a constant delight; and yet when I try to recapture some stray fragments of it I find that all that I can clutch is only one insignificant specimen. And I am not sure that the amusing gibe I am about to quote was of his own invention. After he had been elected an associate of the Royal Academy of Art in London, being already a full member of the National Academy of Design in New York, I congratulated him on having two more letters to tag after his name.

He laughed his contagious laugh and answered: "Don't you know the real meaning of those mystic letters? N.A. stands for No Artist; A.N.A. stands for Almost No Artist; and P.N.A. is Probably No Artist. So R.A. means 'Retched Artist; A.R.A. means Awfully 'Retched Artist; and P.R.A. is Perfectly 'Retched Artist."

## V

Another club which, like The Kinsmen of New York, has gone out of existence, but which for nearly ten years had a recognized position, was the Nineteenth Century Club, founded in the early eighties by Courtlandt Palmer on the model of the Round Table, over which Thomas Wentworth Higginson then presided in Boston. In its turn it served as the model of the still-surviving Contemporary Club of Philadelphia, and the Twentieth Century Club of Chicago. For the first years of its existence, and, in fact, as long as its founder lived, it met in his spacious house in Gramercy Park, 117 East 21st

Street. There was either an "orator of the day," whose position was combated by two or three other speakers, or there was a debate between two representations of opposing views upon some question of immediate interest. I find that I have preserved Courtlandt Palmer's note, informing me that Julian Hawthorne would read a paper on the 'Novel,' on the evening of March 20, 1883, and that he hoped I would say a few words of comment upon it. I accepted the invitation; and I managed to say the few words without disclosing unduly the trepidation caused by the unwonted effort to talk on my feet.

A month later Oliver Wendell Holmes came on from Boston to deliver an address on Emerson, which he incorporated later in his biography for the 'American Men of Letters' series. His commingled humor and good humor, his sparrow-like chirpiness, if the phrase is not disrespectful, impressed me as not altogether congruous with his serious consideration of our most stimulating philosopher. In the course of the next two or three years I heard another philosopher, President McCosh of Princeton, join issue with President Eliot of Harvard over the elective system adopted in New England and rejected in New Jersey. Dr. Eliot opened the debate, stating his case and answering in advance the objections which might be urged against it; and Dr. McCosh followed him, simply restating these objections without attention to the answers which his opponent had already made. Dr. Eliot summed up, reiterating his position and again demolishing the objections.

Then Dr. McCosh arose unexpectedly to express his hope that the debate might be published, evidently wholly unaware that, whatever might be the merits of the question itself, there could be no doubt as to the merits of the debate — a most remarkable exhibition of innocent complacency.

The Nineteenth Century Club had a president and also a dozen or a score of vice-presidents, of whom I soon became one. Its first secretary was George W. Wickersham (afterward attorney-general of the United States); and its second secretary was William Travers Jerome (afterward district attorney of New York City). When Courtlandt Palmer died he was succeeded as president by Daniel Greenleaf Thompson; and after his death, I became the third president of the club, holding the position for two years. During Thompson's presidency and during mine, the meetings were held in hired halls, at first in the spacious galleries of the American Artists Association, and later in the concert-hall of the Madison Square Garden; and I soon began to be aware that the club had lost much of its social character when it had to abandon the private house of its founder, where the atmosphere was intimate and informal, and when it was forced to make the best of a hired hall wholly without any friendly associations. It had been inspired by the indefatigable energy of Courtlandt Palmer himself, and he had imparted to it an impulse which survived with diminishing power thru Thompson's presidency and mine.

Yet in these later years we did not lack a long list

of distinguished speakers—Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Theodore Roosevelt, Bronson Howard, Nicholas Murray Butler, Dion Boucicault; these are only a few names taken at random from our roll. In fact, I think that the most notable evening of the whole career of the club was one of those which illumined the administration of the second president; and I have often regretted that we did not then decide to go out of existence, expiring in a glittering blaze of irradiated glory. This most remarkable of all the meetings of the Nineteenth Century Club was held in the spring of 1889, during Coquelin's first visit to the United States. I persuaded him to deliver a lecture on 'Molière and Shakspeare,' in French, of course; and we decided to have all the other speeches in the tongue of our Revolutionary allies. Thompson asked me to preside for once in his stead, and the two debaters were Frederic R. Coudert and General Horace Porter. The contrast of the French which fell from the mouths of the four successive speakers was as amusing as it was instructive. Coquelin's revealed the choice vocabulary and the pellucid diction of the *Comédie-Française*; Coudert's had the old-fashioned grace of the eighteenth century, when his family had left France; General Porter's had the straightforward vigor of West Point; and upon my own I must refrain from commenting. I admit that I felt the justice of an editorial remark in one of the daily papers the morning after the event to the effect that, at the Nineteenth Century Club, in the competition in speaking French, General Porter and Mr. Brander Matthews

deserved the prize for application, while that for natural ability must be awarded to M. Coquelin.

I should be derelict to my duty if I failed to declare here that I owed to my long membership in the Nineteenth Century Club more than the memory of many pleasant and profitable evenings, for I have a deeper debt to acknowledge. Because I was a member who might be called upon to speak, I was forced to learn how to speak. In my undergraduate days I had not profited by the scant opportunities for debating in the Philolexian Society to which I belonged; and in the law school, when I had once risen to take part in a moot-court, I had made a lamentable failure when my classmates were successful. Therefore, I had come to the conclusion that the ability to make an address was the gift of God, and that it was a boon not divinely bestowed upon me. I heard other men rise to their feet and speak easily and aptly, and I credited their achievement to nature alone, never suspecting the art which made it possible. I hope I did not meanly envy those whom I found in possession of this gift; but I regretted keenly that it had not been granted to me.

I ought to have known better, since I had gained a certain facility with my pen by dint of incessant practice, by taking pains and sparing no trouble to discover, first, what I thought I wanted to say and, second, how to say it clearly and concisely. By good luck I fell in with the little paper of brief but pregnant hints to the tyro orator which Colonel Higginson had drawn from his own practice and his own experience. The reading of that essay opened

my eyes to the fact I had scarcely before suspected — that it is as much an art to speak on the feet as it is to write at the desk. If I had taught myself how to write I did not see why I could not in time teach myself how to speak. And I straightway set about the task of finding out the elementary principles of the art and of applying them as assiduously as possible. The few sentences that I was able to stammer thru the first time I rose to take part in the exercises of the Nineteenth Century were very few indeed. I doubt if I was on my feet for more than five or six minutes. Yet, few as they were, and ragged as they might be, they were carefully prepared, with a carefulness out of all proportion to their value.

And when I say this, I mean that my trouble was out of all proportion to the value to others, for to me my remarks were inestimable, since they proved that if I chose I could say what I had to say as effectively to a hundred auditors as I might say it to a single friend. That first attempt was no triumph, far from it; but at least it was not blank defeat. And I came home with a resolve that the next time I had to address the club I would be at least as well prepared and, if possible, less hesitating and less jerky. The occasions when I was called upon were increasingly frequent until during my two years as president I had to speak, however briefly, two or three times at every meeting. Now as I look back at my efforts of more than thirty years ago I realize that I was not altogether in the wrong in holding that true eloquence is the gift of God, and that the

divine boon had not been bestowed on me. Not only did I lack the endowment of the orator, but I had begun far too late in life to overcome the manifold difficulties of a marvellously difficult art. Yet I rejoice that I persevered until I had attained to the facility which comes with practice and to the confidence which is supported by experience. The appeal of the spoken word was never more potent than it is to-day, even if the written word abides longer. It is a precious possession to be able to look your audiences in the eye and to tell them what you have in your heart, even if your periods are pedestrian and even if your lips have never been touched with a coal of fire.

## CHAPTER XI

### CRITICISM AND FICTION

#### I

**A**LTHO it seemed more convenient to concentrate, in the preceding chapter, an account of the various organizations with which I chanced to be connected, it must not be supposed that they unduly distracted my attention from my labors as a man of letters. I have noted that I edited two early American plays for the Dunlap Society, and that I joined force with Hutton in 1886-1887 in the editing of Bernard's 'Retrospections of America' and of the five volumes devoted to 'Actors and Actresses'; and from time to time I was responsible for other pieces of editing, journeyman work of a modest kind, even if not without its utility. In 1882, I had prepared a selection of the 'Poems of American Patriotism'; and in 1886 I made ready another anthology, 'Ballads of Books,' which was enriched by poems written especially for it by Bunner, Lathrop and Walter Learned in America, and by Austin Dobson, Andrew Lang, Edmund Gosse, and Walter Pollock in England, friends whom I shall consider in my next chapter, and which was re-edited and enlarged in a London edition by Lang. My vanity compels me to note that both of these



selections were pioneers and that the fields I was then the first to plow have been diligently cultivated since by other compilers.

In 1884 I edited the 'Rivals' and the 'School for Scandal,' prefixing a biography of Sheridan. And in 1891, I made a selection of Charles Lamb's 'Dramatic Essays,' with an introduction wherein I had the pleasure of pointing out that his unpretending farce, 'Mr. H,' which had dismally failed in London, leaving its disappointed author greatly grieved by "the deep damnation of its taking off," had been continuously successful in Philadelphia — a fact which would have mightily cheered Elia if it had ever come to his knowledge.

Besides this editing, I was continuously engaged in book-reviewing for the *Nation* and for the *Critic*, contributing to the first number of the latter in January, 1883. For the *Critic* I continued to write during the whole of its thirty years of existence. It was edited by a sister and a brother of Richard Watson Gilder; and so keen was his delicate sense of propriety that he did not permit any one of his successive volumes of verse to be reviewed in its pages. Here his attitude was in marked contrast with that of those in control of other critical journals for which I have written, which made a practice of reviewing the books of their contributors, and even of their editors.

As I look back on my book-reviewing in those early years of comparative inexperience, I cannot but confess that not a little of it was tainted by a vice only too common in the anonymous criticism

of youthful writers. It was likely to have an undue proportion of trivial faultfinding in which I displayed my diligence in picking out all the petty defects which I was able to discover. No doubt, these blemishes were all there, but to list them with persistent particularity was to risk conveying to the reader a false impression of the merit of the book under review. I was prone to show off the extent and the exactness of my own information about the subject; and I could do this only at the expense of the author. I had not then found out the underlying principle of the art of book-reviewing — that the reviewer ought to be a taster for the benefit of his readers. In journalism, daily or weekly, what is most needed is news about the contents of the latest books, an honest report prepared solely for the guidance of the subscribers to the newspaper, with no obligation to lecture the authors of the volumes considered.

As Jules Lemaître once tersely declared, “criticism of our contemporaries is not criticism, it is conversation”; and even if this may be considered as an overstatement of the case, it cannot be dismissed as a misstatement. In general, criticism that is truly criticism devotes itself to the works which have been tested by time; and it refrains from a vain expenditure of its force upon the ephemeral books of the moment only. But it is only with the books of the moment that journalism has to deal; and it is the duty of the book-reviewer to declare what manner of book each of the volumes may be which he considers in turn, and to indicate summarily

how good it is of its kind, so that the readers who like that kind of book will be guided to get it, or to go without it. To say this is not to suggest that the competent journalist must abstain from criticism; it is only to point out that his criticism may be implicit rather than explicit; and that it can be most useful when it expresses itself in selection and in proportion, rather than in an effort at a final evaluation almost impossible until the book can be viewed in a longer perspective.

Another disadvantage of my reviewing in the *Nation* and the *Critic* I came to feel more forcibly the more I was engaged in it — its anonymity. During twenty or thirty years I wrote too many anonymous reviews for me now to be willing to accept Schopenhauer's declaration that an anonymous review is to be classed with an anonymous letter — a thing of which no gentleman would be guilty. Yet I came in time to have an acute distaste for expressing my opinion about an author which I could not warrant with my signature. Often, it is true, my anonymity was only nominal; and the veil was rent, for example, whenever the semiannual index of the *Nation* appeared. Nor did I ever attempt to conceal my responsibility for any adverse opinions I had occasion to express. Often it is urged in behalf of anonymous reviewing that it is the only method which will permit the frank expression of searching condemnation; but to urge this is to condemn anonymity, since this is charging that the reviewer will be honest only when he is masked. And it is abundantly disproved by the courage common in the

signed reviews which now appear in the *Dial*, the *Educational Review* and the *Political Science Quarterly*.

Altho I did not at once abandon anonymous reviewing, since that was the practice of the papers for which I was writing, I had my dislike for it intensified by an incident which occurred in 1887, when Hutton was editing the 'American Actor Series,' to which Kate Field contributed a life of Charles Fechter. This was a pretty good book, in spite of the fact that she greatly overestimated the quality of Fechter's art, under the influence of Dickens's characteristically emphatic eulogy. Fechter was a very picturesque actor, and to this day certain of his highly effective attitudes rise before my eyes — notably that in the last act of 'Ruy Blas' when he suggested by gesture that he was the headsman about to execute the villain. Yet with all his picturesqueness he was prosaic, and as 'Hamlet' he stripped the part of its poetry, reducing the play to its supporting skeleton of melodrama. His career in England and in America Kate Field had handled very well; but she entirely misconceived the position he had held in France. In reviewing her book in the *Nation*, I had dwelt on this defect, probably to show off my private knowledge of Parisian stage history. Still I think that my article was in the main accurate; and I certainly had no desire to be unkind.

I heard later from a friend of hers who was also a friend of mine that my review wounded her grievously, and that she wondered who could have been

guilty of it. As it happened, not long after it appeared, we dined with the Stedmans, and I took in Kate Field to dinner. We had never met before; and as we were both interested in the theater our talk turned upon the stage. And, so our common friend informed me later, she suddenly jumped to the conclusion that I must be the writer of the review which had hurt her feelings so keenly. But by no change of her cordiality toward me was I led then to suspect this discovery at the dinner-table. Her manner remained serene, perhaps more obviously so than mine, since I was inwardly conscious of the anonymity of my review. I recall that I regretted not what I had said, but that it was not signed with my name, so that we might have met for the first time, knowing each of us where we stood.

The year after the founding of the *Critic* I had a brief experience as a reviewer of the acted drama. Henry Holt made me acquainted with a young architect, John Ames Mitchell, recently returned from Paris and planning to start a new weekly. He asked me for suggestions; I made many; and when the first number of *Life* appeared in the first week of 1884, I found that he had adopted none of them. He did, however, enlist me as his theatrical critic; and for several months I contributed a weekly article, signed by a pseudonym I was then in the habit of using occasionally — "Arthur Penn." These weekly articles were cast in form of dialogs, supposed to have taken place before, during, and after the performance of the plays I was reporting upon; and it was by means of this give-and-take

of conversation that I managed to insinuate my criticism of the several performances.

## II

Dialog I was also using about that time in the short-stories that I was writing, either alone or in collaboration. I had attempted fiction while I was still in the law school; and a crudely sensational serial of mine had seen the light in one of the many weekly papers which issued in the seventies and eighties from the publishing house of Frank Leslie. Fortunately this weekly circulated only among the non-literary; and this sin of my youth has never been brought up against me. It is now nearly two-score years since I have seen it and I do not recall any of its incidents, but I suppose I must have modelled it more or less upon the Dime Novels with which Beadle had delighted my boyhood.

In the first stories I wrote after I had begun to contribute to the better magazines there is no trace of my earlier sensational strivings, for my model was then the ingeniously invented tale of Thomas Bailey Aldrich, with an amusing twist of surprise at the end of it; and a little later still I came under the influence of the less artificial cleverness of Ludovic Halévy. When Bunner and I became intimate we had never-ending discussions over our favorite story-tellers; and I discovered that he admired the dexterity of Aldrich as much as I did — altho I doubt if mere dexterity was ever as satisfying to him at any time as it was to me then.

One day in the spring of 1879, when we had been analyzing the device whereby Aldrich had achieved the reader's complete acceptance of the non-existent heroine of his ever delightful 'Margery Daw,' which remains one of the masterpieces of the short-story, we both expressed our regret that the interchange of letters and of telegrams had not been kept up to the end of the tale, of which the final page or two Aldrich had more tamely treated as plain narrative. We agreed that the epistolary form might have been preserved thruout; and then one or the other of us suggested that since Aldrich had carried on his story by commingling letters and telegrams, it might be amusing to eschew narrative altogether, and to construct a coherent series of events to be revealed to the reader by means of letters and telegrams mixed up with all sorts of other things, newspaper paragraphs, advertisements, play-bills, pawn-tickets, and so forth.

We set to work at once and in a few days we concocted a story which we called the 'Documents in the Case.' At first we had intended to manufacture twoscore items less one so that we might entitle our fragmentary narrative the 'Thirty-nine Articles,' but we soon relinquished this irreverent name. When our story was printed in *Scribner's Monthly* the novelty of its form attracted attention; and we were amused to see that our framework was borrowed by half-a-dozen other story-tellers in the course of the next few months.

This was in 1879; and it was then that Émile Zola was shouldering himself to the front in France,

frequently putting forth critical papers wherein he proclaimed the need for a new departure in fiction in accord with the principles of "Naturalism," which prescribed that the novelist should avail himself abundantly of "human documents." Every new movement in art has always insisted on the necessity of returning to "Nature," a chameleon-word changing color with every gaze that rests on it. Bunner and I knew that our 'Documents in the Case,' a most artificially contrived story, owing its sole merit not to its veracity but to its novelty of construction, had nothing in common with the "human documents" for the employment of which Zola was pleading passionately. But this knowledge did not deter us from sending it to him, accompanied by a letter in which, with the calm impudence of irresponsible youth, we called his sympathetic attention to our use of documents. Our missive was written in our best French; and we promptly received a reply to it — a reply addressed to "Messieurs Brander et Bunner, au journal Puck, 21 et 22 Warren-Street, New York." This response was brief and characteristic; and I venture to translate it in full:

MEDAN, 19 " Sept., 1879.

MESSIEURS:

I have not received the American magazine of which you speak. And if I had received it, I could not have read you, for, alas! I am ignorant of English. I am none the less touched by the sympathy which you have kindly testified to me; and I am very happy to learn that my ideas—which are in fact only the ideas of every intelligent man of my age—are finding an echo in America.



There is a rising in mass of all those who desire truth and justice by the aid of knowledge.

Thank you again, and greeting you once more,

ÉMILE ZOLA.

In collaboration with Bunner I composed another short-story, wholly in dialog this time, entitled the 'Seven Conversations of Dear Jones and Baby Van Renssellaer.' And in 1884, Bunner and I put forth together our first volume of fiction, 'In Partnership. Studies in Story-Telling,' which included the two tales we had written together and half-a-dozen more, written by one or the other of us separately. Collaboration is always a mystery to those who have not tried it, and who can never understand how two writers can combine to tell one story. And collaboration is also often a mystery even to those who have tried it, because each of them is frequently unable to separate his own share of the joint labor from that of his associate. I find that I have preserved the original list of the successive items which were to be our documents; and by the initials pencilled against one or another of these items I am reminded that Bunner wrote the paragraph which is a parody of Bret Harte, and that I wrote the letter which is an imitation of John Phoenix. But whether he or I was responsible for any specific one of the others, I cannot now recall; and indeed I feel sure that we were both responsible for all of them, since he may have suggested an item that I wrote, and I may have proposed an item that he preferred to pen. If the collaboration has been

on a true partnership, if it has resulted in a chemical union rather than a mechanical mixture, there is no more possibility of deciding upon the authorship of this or that part of the work than there is of declaring whether the father or the mother is the real parent of their child.

Collaboration has always been very attractive to me; and it has always been the result of the intimacy of friendship with its corresponding sympathy of interest. My collaborators were friends before we undertook a task in common; and they remained my friends in spite of the opportunities for dispute due to the partnership itself. It is a fact that the "artistic temperament" is jealous and touchy; and this is probably why the famous collaborations of Erckmann-Chatrian and of Meilhac and Halévy were violently dissolved. It may be that I am lacking in the "artistic temperament," since my varied associations only cemented the friendships which had preceded them.

I have recorded that I had Hutton for a partner in the editing of two books and Bunner in the writing of two short-stories. In other essays in fiction I collaborated later with George H. Jessop, Walter Harris Pollock, and "F. Anstey"; and I was even enabled to publish, in 1891, a volume containing half-a-dozen stories and entitled 'With My Friends. Tales Told in Partnership.' In a later chapter, when I come to consider my essays in play-writing, I shall have to chronicle the same kind of intimate association with Bunner, with Jessop, and finally with Bronson Howard.

## III

Before speaking further about these earlier efforts in fiction, I must digress for a moment to remark upon the signature which was appended to them. I had been christened James Brander, after my mother's father, and James was also the name of my father's father. Yet I had never been known in the family by any other name than Brander. A few — a very few, indeed — of my classmates in college had called me "Jim"; but the majority of those who knew me were not aware that I had a right to sign myself James. In the title-pages of my two or three earliest books I had subscribed myself as "J. Brander Matthews," altho I had not a little sympathy with those who held that there was a smack of affectation about that method of telescoping a proper name. And I soon found that this method had the immediate disadvantage of lending itself to an unsatisfactory condensation into "J. B. Matthews." It seemed to me that J. B. Matthews was but a feeble trade-mark for a man of letters who had to vend his wares in the open market. So I resolved to drop the preliminary J. and thereafter I appeared on my title-pages simply Brander Matthews, a name individual enough to cling to the memory of those who run as they read.

Here I was following the example of Bret Harte, who had dropped a preliminary F.; of Bayard Taylor, who had cancelled a James; and of Austin Dobson, who had deprived himself of a Henry. I

found out later that John Hay had likewise manufactured his own bold name, after having been matriculated in college as J. Milton Hay, and that Rudyard Kipling had killed off a preliminary Joseph. It seems to me only fair to allow every man to decide for himself the name by which he desires to be known; and so I resolutely slaughtered the J. that I had inherited from both of my grandfathers. But the scrupulous bibliographers refuse me permission for this initial assassination; and the ghost of that long-departed J. still stalks across the pages of catalogs. Moreover, there exist makers of lists, less meticulous than the conscientious bibliographers; and they have assumed a non-existent hyphen between the Brander and the Matthews, and therefore transfer me from under the M., where I belong, to the B., where I am wholly out of place.

Most of the early short-stories which bore my self-made signature appeared in *Scribner's Monthly*, or in *Harper's*. I was on the best of terms with the editors of both; and well as I knew them, and well as I supposed I had ascertained their respective likings, I never could be certain of acceptance. For instance, I had no doubt whatever that Gilder would take a humorous tale which I called the 'Rival Ghosts'; but he declined it; and it was immediately welcomed warmly by Alden. To *Harper's*, as the more receptive, I sent my next story, 'Love at First Sight'; and it speedily came back to me, whereupon I submitted it to *Scribner's*, where it instantly found a resting-place. To this day I can see no explanation of this attitude of the

friendly editors. So far as I can see the 'Rival Ghosts' would have been just as suitable to *Scribner's* as 'Love at First Sight,' and 'Love at First Sight' just as suitable to *Harper's* as the 'Rival Ghosts.'

I could now understand easily enough why both editors should have refused both stories, for when I read them over, not long ago, they seemed to me slight and artificial. They were "clever," and they had little other merit than their cleverness. Lest I may seem to be affecting a false modesty, I must add that I still find in my short-stories of these 'prentice days an ingenuity in plot-making and a neatness of construction, which I am inclined to ascribe to a constant study of the deft play-makers of Paris. These tales had an atmosphere of briskness, even if their apparent brightness did not disguise their indisputable lightness. They were, perhaps, no more superficial than the majority of magazine fictions, altho I am not at all sure of this; but they lacked the sweep of emotion which touches the heart and the depth of character-delineation which lingers in the mind.

I perceive also that in those days I was more keenly interested in the form than in the content. It was on the method rather than on the matter that I spent my effort. In the 'Documents in the Case,' for instance, the story itself was relatively unimportant and we relied upon the unhackneyed way in which we presented it. In 'One Story Is Good till Another Is Told,' which I wrote with Jessop, we simply narrated twice the same set of incidents as

seen thru two different pairs of eyes. In the 'Story of a Story' I set down in succession a swift glimpse of the author who wrote the tale, of the editor who accepted it, of the artist who illustrated it, of the printer who set it up, and of four or five of the readers into whose hands it chanced to fall. In 'Two Letters' I employed a device not dissimilar; and I varied this only a little in 'A Cameo and a Pastel,' — the pastel being an attempt to convey the impression made on me by a midnight party at the studio of William M. Chase to see Carmencita dance, whereas the cameo set over against it was an attempt to resuscitate a symposium at the house of Mæcenas when he entertained Vergil and Horace with two Gaditanian dancers. In all these essays in fiction the frame now appears to me to be more prominent than the picture itself.

The scene of most of these short-stories was generally laid in New York, the city that I knew best and loved best, altho I was not then seeking to convey its characteristic atmosphere. The period was generally the present, as I rarely ventured into an era other than my own. And I took advantage of this uniformity of time and place to carry over characters from one story to another. The "Dear Jones" and the "Baby Van Renssellaer" whom Bunner and I compelled to carry on 'Seven Conversations' had already talked to one another in my 'Rival Ghosts.' It amused me to bring forward prominently in one narrative persons of my creating who had figured in subordinate positions in an earlier experience. "There is a fascination," so Howells

has told us, "which every writer of fiction will own, in recurring to a type once studied; but the novelist indulges this fancy at some risk of wearying his readers." I doubt if I indulged this fancy often enough to weary my readers; and even if I did, I might now ascribe their weariness to other causes.

I carried over a group of these characters from my short-stories to a story long enough to stand by itself in a volume, long enough, indeed, to be considered as a novel. I can see now that the 'Last Meeting' lacked not a little of the breadth and the depth of a real novel, that it was in fact only a short-story writ large, and that it would have gained in effect if it had been kept down to the dimensions of a novelet. It had at the core of it what I still believe to be a fine romantic idea; and I am confirmed in this belief by the fact that Robert Louis Stevenson shared it.

## CHAPTER XII

### EARLY LONDON MEMORIES

#### I

I HAD visited London repeatedly in my youth; and I had spent several weeks there in 1873, on my wedding trip. But the dingy town had never appealed to me as Paris did. I am inclined to think that this lack of attraction is to be attributed not so much to the contrast of the gray skies of the English city with the sparkling sunshine of its French rival as to the fact that our family was likely always to find friends in Paris, whereas we had few acquaintances in London. In the seventies I looked upon the British metropolis as a place to be passed thru swiftly, while the French capital was a place where we could settle down for a stay. In the eighties these conditions changed; and as I came to have more friends in London than in Paris, I began to abridge my visits to France and to abide longer and longer in England. It was to Austin Dobson that I owed my introduction to a circle of literary men whose welcome soon made London rather than Paris the goal of my summer voyaging.

Ever since I had chanced to come across Frederick Locker's 'Lyra Elegantiarum,' — I think in 1870 — I had delighted in society verse, as it is often mis-called, *vers de société*, "familiar verse," as Cowper



termed it, the brief, brilliant, buoyant lyric of Præd and Locker and Holmes; and when I came into possession of Dobson's 'Proverbs in Porcelain,' in the spring of 1878, I was fascinated by the delicate art with which he had acclimated the foreign ballade and rondeau and triolet to our ruder tongue, bestowing upon his metrical experiments the blithe spirit of English familiar verse. I reviewed his poems promptly for the *Nation*; and I prepared a paper for *Appleton's Journal* explaining the principle of these fixed forms and illustrating the theory by examples taken from 'Proverbs in Porcelain.' Bunner shared my interest in these novel additions to metrical practice; and we published in *Scribner's Monthly* and in *Puck* the earliest American examples of the rondeau and the ballade. I believe that my paper in *Appleton's* on 'Varieties of Verse' was the pioneer essay introducing the French forms to American readers.

With his customary kindness, Stedman forwarded this article of mine to Dobson, informing him that its author was going over to England that summer; and with his customary kindness Dobson wrote back, asking Stedman to send me word that he would be glad to see me when I was in London. So it was that I made the acquaintance of Austin Dobson, an acquaintance that immediately ripened into a friendship enduring now for nearly twoscore years. Like so many other English men of letters, Dobson had a position in the civil service; and I found him in a remote room in the inner recesses of the group of old rambling houses in Whitehall Gardens, behind

the Banqueting House, whence Charles I went to his beheading. The office in which Dobson did his daily work was low-ceilinged and dim, altho it had a window on the rear gardens that stretched down to the Thames Embankment. At that first meeting he called my attention to the fact that it was this dark and distant office he had in mind when he penned his lovely lyric 'To a Greek Girl,' in which he recaptured not a little of the airy freedom and the ineffable grace of the lighter Alexandrian poets.

Where'er you pass, — where'er you go,  
 I hear the pebbly rillets flow;  
 Where'er you go, — where'er you pass,  
 There comes a gladness on the grass;  
 You bring blithe airs where'er you tread, —  
     Blithe airs that blow from down and sea;  
 You wake in me a Pan not dead, —  
     Not wholly dead! Antonoë!

. . . . .

In vain, — in vain! The years divide;  
*Where Thamís rolls a murky tide,*  
*I sit and fill my painful reams,*  
 And see you only in my dreams; —  
 A vision like Alcestis, brought  
     From under-lands of Memory, —  
 A dream of Form in days of Thought,  
     A dream, — a dream, Antonoë.

By a curious coincidence I had received from Bunner, only a few days before Dobson quoted to me the two lines I have here italicized, a letter in which he told me of a midnight meeting with Francis S. Saltus, and of that uncertain poet's immediate

appreciation of the exquisite fragrance of this lyric. Bunner reported that Saltus had suddenly pulled out a newspaper clipping with the remark that "this poem contains the whole spirit of Greece in four stanzas. I found it in a Baltimore paper, and I have written everywhere to find out who is the author. It is grand; it is beautiful; it is godlike. I have cried over it; I have hugged it; I have kissed it! Listen:

With breath of thyme and bees that hum,  
Across the grass you seem to come —"

Then Bunner interrupted, crying, "Austin Dobson!" and continuing the quotation,

Across the years with nymph-like head,  
And wind-blown brows unfilleted.

Saltus was delighted to discover the name of the author; and in his joy he read the poem aloud with a trembling voice. And after telling me this Bunner made the sensible comment that this perfervid enthusiasm, ridiculous as it would be in either of us, seemed natural enough and even pardonable in Saltus, "that strange creature of genius."

## II

But it is Dobson that I am now writing about and not Saltus, my old schoolfellow at Charlier's, who had a gleam of genius and whose life was to flicker out in gloom and disappointment. I had been able

to go to the Board of Trade only a day or two before I left London for New York. In the three years that intervened before I went to Europe again Dobson and I corresponded frequently. I was able to place poems of his (and also of Andrew Lang's, sent me by Dobson) in the pages of *Scribner's Monthly*; and at his request I was glad to procure for his friend Frederick Locker one or two first editions of American authors to fill vacancies in the Rowfant library.

Then in 1881 I crossed the Atlantic again, arriving in London more gladly than ever before, since I now had there one friend at least; and almost immediately I made half-a-dozen others. The Austin Dobsons invited us out to Ealing to meet the Edmund Gosses; and the Gosses invited us to their very pleasant Sunday afternoons, at the first of which I met Andrew Lang.

From Dobson, Lang had learned that I was intending to write a life of Molière — the biography which was not to appear until nearly thirty years later, and from Dobson I had learned that Lang was also contemplating a life of Molière, which he had already outlined in an article in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, but which he was never to begin. So far from feeling that I was poaching on his preserves, he seized an early occasion at this first meeting to take me aside and to proffer to me all the books he had collected for his own use. This was characteristic of his large-mindedness; and magnanimity was only one of the elements of his charm. He had at first, so it seemed to me then, what I can, perhaps, best describe as an outer crust of Oxford aloofness,

intended for external use only, and accompanied by a trace of toploftiness, which temporarily concealed his incessant friendliness, his active sympathy, and his constant cordiality.

Lang was the most versatile, the most fecund, and the most learned man it was ever my good fortune to know intimately. He was the only scholar in the narrowest sense of the word (as well as in the widest) who was able to combine the pursuit of scholarship with the practice of daily and weekly journalism. When I first met him he was engaged in writing a daily editorial article in *Daily News* upon literary and social topics; and a selection of these has been replevined from the swift oblivion of the back numbers in a volume entitled 'Lost Leaders.' He was printing two or three or four long articles every week in the *Saturday Review*, besides contributing unceasingly to other weeklies, to many monthlies, and not infrequently to the quarterlies. He was ready to write at any time upon any subject; and upon almost every subject he seemed to have special knowledge. Even when he lacked solid information his mind was so alert and so keen that he was able swiftly to seize the essential principles needed to formulate a valuable opinion. Of course, he had sometimes to treat topics not congenial; and I recall one paper of his, on Zola, wherein I failed to find his customary felicity.

Yet these comparative failures were very few indeed; and he rarely touched a subject that he did not adorn. His wealth of learning did not weight him down; and he wore the panoply of scholarship

as unconsciously as a well-greaved Greek went forth to battle in full armor. His erudition did not debar him from lightness of touch; and he could be deliciously witty even when he was girding at Max Müller and disestablishing the sun-myth theories of that Anglo-Teutonic dogmatist. He was one of the best Grecians in England; and the prose translations of the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the Homeric hymns, and the Theocritan idyls, which he prepared (either in association with other scholars or alone), abide to prove his possession of the twofold qualification which many other translators fail to have — a mastery of the language into which he was translating equal to the mastery of the language out of which he was translating.

He had as intimate an acquaintance with old French as he had with Greek; and his rendering of 'Aucassin and Nicolette' is as deftly and as delicately accurate as his version of Theocritus. He was one of the foremost folklorists of his time — supporting his own significant suggestions by a heterogeneity of illustrations derived from his immense erudition. No one of his contemporaries had a clearer knowledge of the complicated genealogy of omnipresent myths or a sounder understanding of the circumstances which brought about their spontaneous generation, century after century in widely scattered races. He contributed essential elements to that history of the totem which is still in dispute. And in all these researches into the barbaric past, and into the savage present, he revealed the sterling integrity of the scientific investigator. It may be

that he was at times a little annoyed to perceive that some of his fellow-scientists were inclined to resent the incursion into an area they had pre-empted for their own of a writer who had won a wide reputation in two other fields as diametrically opposed as journalism and classical scholarship.

There is a very natural tendency on the part of the narrow specialist, observable also even in the public at large, to disbelieve in the attainments of any one who disperses his activities in different directions; and there is no doubt that Lang's reputation in each of the departments in which he labored was a little less than it might have been had he confined himself solely to one specialty. His fame suffered from the fact that he was, in the apt phrase of Mrs. Malaprop, "like Cerberus, three single gentlemen in one." He was first of all a working journalist, then he was a scholar, abundant in contribution and discovery; and finally he was a man of letters. Nor is this a full statement of his infinite variety, for as a man of letters he appeared in three guises — as a critic, as an essayist, and as a poet. It never need be wondered at that a versatility so truly unique should awaken doubts — doubts naturally increased by Lang's possession of the dangerous gift of humor, by his inability to be stolidly serious, by a tricky whimsicality which would sometimes flash across the pages of his graver inquiries, lightening scholarship with wit.

The general reader was made aware of his humor and his wit in the delightful 'Letters to Dead Authors,' essays in epistolary parody, one of the

minor masterpieces of latter-day English literature, and probably the single volume of Lang's likely to survive longest — playful in temper, but acute in critical appreciation. He had the fourfold qualification of the genuine critic — insight, equipment, disinterestedness, and sympathy; and these qualifications lifted his indefatigable contributions to the *Saturday Review* far above the average level of journalistic book-reviewing. Whatever he did he did with zest and gusto; and he did it in his own fashion, without effort to disguise his own individuality. He told me once that he had been called upon to review anonymously a volume of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* to which he had contributed an important article, and that he fell foul of his own contribution because it did not contain certain facts that had come to his knowledge since he had passed it for press — to the natural dissatisfaction of the editors of the cyclopedia, who instantly recognized Lang's handiwork in the unsigned review.

He published three or four volumes of his lighter verse and of his metrical translations from the French and from the Greek. His only long poem, 'Helen of Troy,' never received the approbation it merited. I was glad to be able to arrange for an American edition, issued by Charles Scribner's Sons; and when he acknowledged the publisher's check, he remarked that "they have generous ideas of payment, those Scribneridæ." He wrote verse as easily as he wrote prose, with an instinct for the inevitable word. I told him one day of the French gibe against Scribe, who was asserted to lay the scene of his



plays in a land of his own invention, where the manners and customs and laws were always precisely in accord with the necessities of his plot. This far country had been designated as *La Scribie*. The day after we had had this chat I read in an afternoon paper a copy of verses called '*Partant pour la Scribie*,' in which Lang described the undiscovered country as

A land of lovers false and gay;  
 A land where people dread a "curse";  
 A land of letters gone astray,  
 Or intercepted, which is worse;  
 Where weddings false fond maids betray,  
 And all the babes are changed at nurse.

I recall one afternoon when we were discussing the ways of improvisers, and when I challenged him to write a sonnet in fifteen minutes. He laughed and asked for a topic, which I gave him. He seized paper and pencil, as I took out my watch. He wrote thirteen lines in thirteen minutes; and then, with another laugh, he tore up what he had set down. On another occasion I was telling him of a story which I was going to write (and which I did write, calling it '*A Secret of the Sea*'), wherein I proposed to have an ocean-liner held up by a yacht and forced to surrender the specie it was carrying. "Why write about it?" Lang asked gravely. "Wouldn't it be more fun to do it yourself?"

He was a lover of beautiful books, learned in the lore of bindings and of collectors; and I persuaded him to permit an American publisher to make a

volume out of his scattered essays on these subjects. I collected the papers and made it ready for the press; and Lang sent over a triolet in which he dedicated to me this volume, entitled 'Books and Bookmen':

You took my vagrom essays in,  
You found them shelter over sea, —  
Beyond the Atlantic's foam and din  
You took my vagrom essays in!  
If any reader there they win  
To you he owes them, not to me.  
You took my vagrom essays in,  
You found them shelter over sea.

I may record also that in testimony to our equal devotion to Molière, Lang inscribed to me the brilliant 'Ballade of Old Plays' in which he resuscitated in successive stanzas the customs of the court, the town, and the theater.

When these old plays were new.

### III

Thru the kindness of Dobson I had the pleasure, in 1881, of making the acquaintance of another of his intimate friends, Frederick Locker, who was soon after to assume the name of Locker-Lampson. He caused me to be invited to the Athenæum Club, always difficult of access to strangers; and at the Athenæum he introduced me one dismal afternoon to the dark-visaged Abraham Hayward, whom he persuaded to recite for us the ribald and libellous verses that Praed had rimed in dishonor of Lady

Blessington — verses that Hayward always refused to write out, and that, therefore, perished with him. Like Hayward, who was the author of the article in the *Quarterly* which first proclaimed the value of ‘Vanity Fair,’ then midway in its course of publication in monthly parts, like Hayward, Locker had been a friend of Thackeray’s. And it was Thackeray who had said to Locker when the latter was cast down by some editor’s rejection of a poem — “Never mind, Locker, our verses may be small beer, but at any rate they are the right tap!”

It was the tap from which Thackeray had drawn ‘Without and Within’ and the ‘Ballad of Bouillabaisse,’ and from which Praed drew the ‘Belle of the Ball,’ that Locker drew ‘Piccadilly’ and ‘St. James’s Street.’ In the successive issues of his ‘London Lyrics’ Locker had varied the contents, rejecting earlier lyrics that had ceased to please him and inserting newer verses; and a little while before I met him he had asked Dobson to go over his poems and to make a selection of the best to appear as the definitive edition of ‘London Lyrics.’ This his younger friend had done with unerring discretion; and Locker gave to his friends, of whom I was then fortunately to be numbered, a privately printed volume, for which Dobson, who was responsible for the choice of its contents, had provided this condensed criticism in verse:

Apollo made, one April day,  
A new thing in the riming way;  
Its turn was neat, its wit was clear,

It wavered 'twixt a smile and tear;  
Then Momus gave a touch satiric,  
And it became a 'London Lyric.'

Locker was delighted with Dobson's selection of his best verses for this final book; but soon his heart began to yearn over the lost sheep, over the poems excluded to all eternity from paradise. At last he resisted no longer and herded all the outcasts into another privately printed volume which he entitled 'London Rimes.' As he wrote me once, the worst in 'London Lyrics' is better than the best in 'London Rimes'; none the less did the second little book go forth to take its place beside the first on the book-shelves of his friends.

Locker had sent this definitive edition of the 'Lyrics' to Gilder as well as to me; and Gilder asked me to write a critical essay on Locker for *Scribner's Monthly*, which was about to become the *Century Magazine*. With the aid of counsel from Dobson and from Bunner, I prepared the paper. After it appeared, Gilder agreed to let me write a companion piece on Dobson; and when next I went to London I sought counsel of Locker as the one fellow-poet most likely to help me to seize the essential traits of 'Vignettes in Rime' and 'Proverbs in Porcelain.' He spent two or three hours with me going over Dobson's work; and at the end of our several meetings I made a curious discovery. All unconsciously to himself, for he was as loyal to Dobson as Dobson was to him, he had been constructing a ring-fence around the restricted domain of

*vers de société* with himself inside the inclosure and with Dobson outside. I think that if I had then put to him in plain words his unformulated thought, he would have admitted it frankly, explaining that Dobson was too emphatically a poet for his Pegasus to be wholly at ease in the narrow paddock of familiar verse, wherein ample pasturage might be found for half-poets like himself. And I perceived that what Locker did not say in so many words was absolutely just. Dobson's muse wore the flowing robe proper for climbing the slopes of Parnassus, and only on occasion was she willing to appear in the tailor-made garb of her sister who inspired the lyrist of London.

By these dark hints of Locker I profited when I penned my paper; and I did not hesitate to tell Dobson what Locker had intimated. For a moment, altho for a moment only, Dobson was taken aback. Then he admitted that Locker was quite right. "I think that the best of my work is not purely familiar verse," he admitted. "In fact, I wrote verse of that kind mainly because I saw that it provided an opening for me when I was young and unknown."

I should be false to another friend if I failed to note here that Bunner's appreciation of Dobson's art was as helpful to me as Locker's. I find a letter of the time in which he sent me hints, calling the lines 'To a Greek Girl' the most purely beautiful of all Dobson's work, resting the spirit, if it did not touch the heart. "Most classicism shows us only the white temple, the clear high sky, the outward beauty of form and color. This ('To a Greek Girl')

gives us the warm air of spring; the life that pulses in a girl's veins like the soft swelling of sap in a young tree. This is the same feeling that raises 'As You Like It' above all pastoral poetry. Our nineteenth-century sensibilities are so played on by the troubles, the sorrows, the little vital needs and anxieties of the world around us, that sometimes it does us good to get out into the woods and fields of another world entirely, if only the atmosphere is not chilled and rarefied by the lack of the breath of humanity."

A few years later when I reprinted the papers on Locker and Dobson in a volume called 'Pen and Ink, Essays on Subjects of More or Less Importance,' I asked Bunner and Dobson for poems to go in the front and at the back of my book. They acceded to my request; Bunner's epistle in rime will be found at the end of my volume; but when Dobson gave me his verses he expressed a doubt as to the propriety of his contributing to a book containing a criticism of his own work. Since this appeared to him to be a question of taste, I could do no more than yield to his feeling; and Lang supplied me with a prefatory poem, 'Pen and Ink.' Dobson's lines may now appear in print for the first time:

With pen and ink full many a sin  
The reckless race of men begin;  
Not only with their black or blue  
They stain the page of virgin hue;

But thereupon, forsooth must spin  
Their tangled web of false and true  
With pen and ink!

And worse than this—they wily grin  
To think how all their kith and kin,  
    Ay, and the long-eared Public, too,  
Must buy these desperate things they do,  
    With pen and ink!

Space may also be found here for a briefer effort of the playful poet, only a couplet, that he inscribed in a copy of the original edition of Sheridan's 'Rivals,' published in 1775, which he sent me, after an untoward delay, due to the dilatoriness of the bookbinders:

Behold the long-hoped gift arrive:—  
‘Old Sherry—brand of Seventy-Five.’

Before leaving Locker I must record two remarks of his. He had a high regard for the lighter lyrics of Holmes, calling him—in the preface to 'Lyra Elegantiarum'—"perhaps the best living writer" of familiar verse. He paid the American poet the sincerest of compliments by borrowing the form of the 'Last Leaf' for his own 'To My Grandmother':

This relative of mine,  
Was she seventy-and-nine  
    When she died?  
By the canvas may be seen  
How she look'd at seventeen,  
    As a bride.

And one day when we were discussing the art of versification—it may have been during one of our long talks about Dobson—he drew my atten-

tion to the peculiarity of this six-line stanza, declaring that it seemed to be easy, altho it was in fact very difficult. "In fact," he concluded, "I don't think that any one, excepting only Holmes and myself, has been really successful with it."

When Mr. Cobden-Sanderson set up as a binder, Locker sent to ask if he would cover some books for him. To which the craftsman, in the pride of his achievement, responded that he did not care to bind "anything ephemeral." Locker suspected that this reply was intended to prevent his request to have his own 'London Lyrics' sumptuously preserved for posterity in one of Mr. Cobden-Sanderson's magnificently decorated morocco covers; and this nettled him a little, so he sent word again that the volume he wished to have worthily bound was a first edition of Shakspeare's 'Sonnets' — "if Mr. Cobden-Sanderson did not consider that too ephemeral."

#### IV

Dobson and Lang and Gosse were members of the Savile Club, which had been founded by Sidney Colvin and which was then occupying a house in Savile Row — the same house in which Richard Brinsley Sheridan had died, as the tablet declared which the Society of Arts had placed on its front. One or another of my new-found friends put me up at the Savile during my successive visits to London, until I was elected a member, in 1885. A custom of the club made the path easy for the feet of the stranger within its doors; this was the social con-



vention that those who chanced to sit side by side at luncheon or at dinner or in the smoking-room should feel at liberty to talk to one another without waiting for the formality of introduction. This is a sensible club tradition which makes for good-fellowship, as I soon found out for myself. One day I dropped in to lunch and sat at a table where I spied some one I knew. Next to him sat an alert little man with a keen face and sharp eyes; and before I had finished my lunch I recognized that I was in the presence of a master of conversation, a talker who could have held his own against John Hay or Clarence King. He was frank and unaffected, yet he had an air of distinction. His manner was most friendly and engaging, and when our modest meal was over, I followed him up-stairs to the smoking-room for our coffee. As we took our seats I saw Lang in the next room, and I rushed over to him, with an eager inquiry as to the name of the unknown conversationalist. Lang glanced back and answered: "That's Jenkin — Fleeming Jenkin. He's a great authority on drains!"

At the moment the name did not mean anything to me; and I only wondered how it was that a personality so interesting happened to be an authority on drains. As a matter of fact, Fleeming Jenkin was the originator of the system of sewage-disposal introduced into America by Colonel George E. Waring; and he spoke to me later most appreciatively of the American engineer's work. But he was more than an authority on drains, since he had been closely associated with Lord Kelvin in the

development of transatlantic telegraphing. With characteristic enjoyment he narrated to me at a subsequent meeting, certain details of his visit to America in supervision of the Atlantic cables, and he dwelt with amusement on the swiftness with which he had cut short an effort of Jay Gould to bribe him.

At the time I met him he was engaged in developing a method of aërial transportation by means of electrical appliances, a system which he called telpherage, and in which he had as an associate, a young electrical engineer, Gordon Wigan, soon also to become a friend of mine. But it was not as a practical scientist that Jenkin interested me but as an artist in conversation; and yet when I try to recall specimens of his talk my memory is empty, and I think that this must be because he was not primarily a wit, crackling with quips readily remembered. He had wit in abundance but he was no mere phrase-maker; his wit was not concentrated in portable epigram, but dispersed and generally illuminating. His was a wit of ideas rather than a wit of words; and in him wit was less obvious than the free play of intelligence. Once in the smoking-room when a group of us were exchanging impressions, some one started a new topic and some one else turned to Jenkin and said: "You ought to have a theory about that."

"Of course, I ought," Jenkin replied instantly. "And I'll make one on the spot just to satisfy you!"

He had been a professor at the University of

Edinburgh when Robert Louis Stevenson was an undergraduate there; and as a consequence of the friendship then begun, Stevenson prepared the prefatory memoir for the two volumes of his literary and scientific remains. Perhaps because Stevenson was desperately ill when he accepted this unwelcome task out of loyalty to his dead friend, writing it in bed and rewriting it repeatedly to please the widow of his old professor, this memoir has always seemed to me the least successful of all Stevenson's works. It would be unfair to describe it as patronizing; but when I first read it I could not but feel that Jenkin was a larger figure than he appeared in Stevenson's pages. Far better is the portrait in the pair of papers on 'Talk and Talkers' in which Jenkin figures as Cockshot, being contrasted with Gosse and Henley and R. A. M. Stevenson, all of whom I knew, finding no one of them more satisfactory in conversation than Jenkin.

Fleeming Jenkin was one of the very few men I have met who knew anything about acting, the least understood of all the arts. Now and again I have found a player or a playwright who had an insight into the principles of this art; but almost the only laymen of my acquaintance possessed of a grasp of histrionic theory were Jenkin and his associate, Gordon Wigan — and the latter had it by inheritance, being a son of Alfred Wigan. It was Wigan who favored me with an annihilating criticism of a performer of long service in the London theaters. "I don't deny that he is the most scholarly and accomplished actor on our stage," was Wigan's re-

mark; "but sooner than see him act I'd rather be all alone by myself in a dark room!"

I recall that I capped this by quoting an American criticism of an American actor of equal prominence which was quite as damnatory since it consisted of a single sentence — "Mr. Blank's 'Hamlet' is no way to behave."

With Wigan I had a point of contact other than our common enjoyment of acting; we were both students of the art of prestidigitation. So was a friend of his who soon became a friend of mine, Walter Herries Pollock, the brother of the present Sir Frederick Pollock and the son of the Sir Frederick Pollock who had edited Macready's 'Reminiscences.' When I made his acquaintance in the summer of 1881, Walter Pollock was the second in command in the editorial office of the *Saturday Review*; and in our first talk I expressed my delight in a review of one of "Professor" Hoffman's manuals of parlor-magic which had appeared in the *Saturday* a week or two earlier. "You shall meet the man who wrote that," said Pollock; "he is a very unusual man." And when I did meet him I soon found that this was not the overstatement of an enthusiastic friend, for the article on conjuring had been written by E. H. Palmer, professor of Arabic at Cambridge, and also at that time a chief leader-writer for the *Standard*.

Palmer was an extraordinary creature of unusual appearance and of unusual attainments in out-of-the-way lines; and it was fortunate for me that I was able to make his acquaintance when I did, since

the next summer, when he was attached as interpreter-in-chief to the English expeditionary forces in Egypt, he was sent on a secret mission to the sheiks of the desert, in the course of which he was led into an ambush and slain. He and Wigan, Pollock and I were all followers of Robert-Houdin, and we chose to believe that as the original Rosicrucians had possibly been professional conjurors, we felt ourselves authorized to revive the Brotherhood. Like all adepts in modern magic, we took no stock in the manipulations of professional spiritual mediums; and as Pollock ascertained that a distinguished man of science, also a member of the Savile, had leanings toward spiritualism, he organized a séance at his house with intent to prove that the magicians who made no pretense to supernatural powers could work marvels quite as mysterious as those exhibited by the spiritualists.

The burden of this enterprise fell upon Palmer; and about a dozen of us, including the man of science, met at Pollock's for a couple of hours one evening. His house had on its main floor two rooms, a drawing-room and a dining-room, separated by a smaller antechamber. Two of the manifestations deserve a detailed record. In one of them, an illustration of thought-transference, Palmer sat himself down at the dining-table in the rear room with his back to the drawing-room, in which Pollock was seated at another table, with his back to the dining-room; and before each of them was a chess-board with its complete complement of men. The rest of us wandered from one table to the other, while

Wigan stood in the antechamber between, to act as umpire. With watch in hand he called out "Black can make his first move," whereupon Palmer pushed forward a pawn. Without any possibility of communication Pollock instantly copied that move on the board before him, and then pushed forward one of his own pawns, a move immediately repeated by Palmer in the other room. Then the umpire called on Black to make a second move, which Pollock imitated, making his second move in response. And so the silent game was played out to the end with no interchange of signals from one player to the other. I confess that this mystery might have baffled me if I had not known in advance that the game had been memorized by both players.

Then Palmer was blindfolded and stationed in a far corner of the drawing-room, while the rest of us gathered in the dining-room about the scientific man who was to write a number which Palmer was to divine at a distance. I saw the number written; it was 666; and I saw also that the prearranged signal which was to convey it to the blindfolded guesser had failed to reach him. While Pollock and Wigan were holding the attention of the others, in a vain effort to work the secret system of communication, I slipped back to Palmer and whispered the number to him. He gave me time to resume my place with the others, who had not noticed my absence; and then with a shout he sprang up and tore the handkerchief from his eyes and rushed toward us, his grayish hair bristling as he came forward, as tho under a potent spell. "What is

this?" he cried in awestruck tones. "I do not see a number. What I behold is a huge horned beast — a beast with seven horns!"

And we all know that the number of the Beast was six hundred and sixty and six.

## V

Palmer and Pollock were equally intimate with Walter Besant, the novelist, then the secretary of the Palestine Exploration Fund; in fact, they were both collaborators of his, since Pollock and Besant had joined forces in a short story or two, and in an adaptation of 'Gringoire,' while Palmer and Besant had been jointly responsible for a history of Jerusalem. And Besant was a close friend of Charles Godfrey Leland, the rimer of the ballads of "Hans Breitmann," who was also a close friend of Palmer's, with whom he used to patter Romany — the gipsy tongue being Leland's specialty, and being only one out of the many strange languages that Palmer had mastered for the fun of it. To Leland was due the establishment in the early eighties of an intermittent dining-club, which lasted some ten years, and which never quite attained the power and prestige that he hoped for it. This was the Rabelais Club, designed to bring together all those in Europe and America revering the memory of the Master, who was one of the wisest men of his time and one of the mightiest humorists of all time.

Lord Houghton accepted the presidency; Besant and Pollock were the secretaries; and it had grown

to a membership of perhaps twoscore when either Besant or Pollock invited me to one of its infrequent dinners. I think that this was in 1883, and the next year I was elected a member, altho I expressed a modest doubt to Besant, when he proposed me, as to my competence to pass a Pantagruelist examination. A characteristic smile broadened his face as he explained that the Rabelais Club admitted members of two different sets of qualifications. "To be worthy of acceptance, you must declare on oath that you have diligently read the works of the Master, or else you must make affidavit that you have not read them faithfully. So long as you can make one or the other of these declarations you are eligible."

There were already several Americans besides Leland in the Rabelais when I joined — Holmes, Longfellow and Lowell, Henry James and Bret Harte; and others were elected after I was — E. A. Abbey, Lawrence Barrett, John Hay, Clarence King, and Howells. Its membership included a few artists, but a large majority were men of letters, many of whom were scholars, as the three volumes of the 'Recreations of the Rabelais Club' amply prove. These recreations were the leaflets prepared by different members on different occasions to place by the sides of the plates at the dinner-table. Sometimes they were satiric fragments of lost books by the Master; and sometimes they were co-operative exhibitions of the scholarly skill of half-a-dozen members joining forces for the occasion. For example, for one of our dinners the present Sir Frederick Pollock wrote a brief stanza in German in praise



of Beethoven's symphonies, which Samuel Lee turned into Latin, from which ancient tongue Besant rendered it into English that George Saintsbury might put it into Greek and Palmer into Arabic. At another dinner a single leaflet contained a couplet and a quatrain signed only with the initial H, which concealed Lord Houghton, I think. This is the couplet:

God gave Free Will to People and to Prince;  
And has been very sorry for it ever since.

And this is the quatrain:

On the Twelfth of September, one Sabbath morn,  
I shot a hen-pheasant, in standing corn,  
Without a license. Combine who can  
Such a cluster of crimes against God and man.

For a third dinner Wigan and Pollock and I prepared a mock examination-paper designed to test a knowledge of the mysteries of the show-business in all its branches, opera and melodrama, conjuring and acrobatics; and I doubt if any one of the three members of the revived Rosicrucian Brotherhood could have passed it, while the rest of the Rabelaisians must have been surprised to discover that so many mysterious questions could be asked about objects unknown. That the test was rather stiff may be gaged from these sample queries:

1. What is a tranko?
2. Distinguish between a star and a vampire. What is the French name of the latter, and why?

11. Describe the act known as the 'Courier of St. Petersburg' in not more than twenty lines. Explain the name.
13. What is a battoute? Describe the Barnum method of using it in connection with elephants.
15. 'Pete Jenkins.' Explain this name.

When it was announced that Oliver Wendell Holmes was going to make his second visit to Europe in 1886, at the ripe age of seventy-seven — he had been born in the same year with Poe and Gladstone and Lincoln — an invitation was at once cabled to him to dine with the Rabelais, of which he was an early member. And the dinner took place on June 6; it was the largest and the most distinguished of all the Rabelaisian banquets, and the only one at which there was any speaking, for the British members wanted to hear how the Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table would acquit himself at a dinner-table. To me this dinner was made memorable by the presence of George Meredith, to whom Locker very kindly presented me and with whom I was about to have a talk that I should have been glad to record here, if dinner had not been announced almost as soon as we had shaken hands.

We all felt it to be eminently fit and proper that a club named in honor of a humorist who was a physician should express its admiration for a physician who was a humorist. Holmes himself seems to have had more doubts about his hosts than we Rabelaisians had about our guest. "I was afraid," so he wrote in the record of his hundred days in Europe, "that the gentlemen who met

To laugh and shake in Rabelais' easy-chair

might be more hilarious and demonstrative in their mirth than I, a sober New Englander in the superfluous decade, might find myself equal to. But there was no uproarious jollity; on the contrary, it was a pleasant gathering of literary people and artists, who took their pleasure not sadly but serenely."

I forget whether or not Leland was present at the dinner to Holmes. If he had seen the cordiality and the character of that gathering he might have been consoled for Browning's refusal to accept election to the Rabelais Club. "I have never got over Browning's declining," Leland wrote in a letter; "I want him to regret it. He will regret it if we progress as we are doing." And in another letter Leland declared that he wanted "the Rabelais to coruscate — whiz, blaze, sparkle, fulminate, and bang!" And all these things it did simultaneously on the evening of the dinner to Holmes. Thereafter it revolved for a while like a catherine-wheel after the fireworks have spluttered out.

## CHAPTER XIII

### EARLY LONDON MEMORIES. II

#### I

**I** BEGIN this record with the columnar, self-reliant capital letter to signify that there is no disguise in its egoisms," so Holmes declared on the first page of his account of the visit to Europe during which he was the guest of the Rabelais Club; and no reader of this record of mine can now expect any attempt to disguise its egoisms. I talk about my elders and betters as often as I can, but none the less do my wandering recollections cluster around myself, however modestly I may seem to seek shelter behind others. Yet I do not tell all that I might about my own sayings and doings, or I should here set down in detail the circumstances of an inspection of the misshapen and inconveniently Gothic law-courts made under the kindly guidance of the late Sir Frederick Pollock; I should describe a **Kinsmen** breakfast at the Savile, when we welcomed Locker to our ranks; and I should dilate upon a dinner at the Garrick with J. Ashby-Sterry to meet E. W. Godwin, the architect, and W. G. Wills, the very Irish author of the 'Charles I' in which Irving was so dignified and so pathetic. I should explain copiously the circumstances which led Rider Haggard

to ask me to put my name beside his on 'She,' which he was about to publish, and for which he hoped to be able to secure an American copyright if a citizen of the United States could claim to be its joint author; and I should report the speeches at the dinner given to Henry Irving on the 4th of July, 1883, on the eve of his first visit to America, a dinner over which Lord Coleridge presided most felicitously, and at which Lowell, then our representative in Great Britain, spoke in his happiest vein.

Out of the flotsam and jetsam which the dark tides of Time deposit on the shallow shores of Memory, I clutch at the vision of a goodly company gathered in the private dining-room of the Savile when Gosse invited a group of his friends to do honor to Howells. Of our fellow-guests I can recall with certainty only Thomas Woolner, the sculptor-poet, Austin Dobson, George Du Maurier, Thomas Hardy, and William Black. And I can rescue only two fleeting fragments of the talk. The first was a discussion of the reasons for the disappearance of revenge as a motive in fiction — a discussion which resulted in a general agreement that as men no longer sit up nights on purpose to hate other men, the novelists have been forced to discard that murderous desire to get even which had been a main spring of romance in less sophisticated centuries.

Over the second topic there could be no general agreement, since it was a definition of the image called up in our several minds by the word *forest*. Until that evening I had never thought of forest as clothing itself in different colors and taking on

different forms in the eyes of different men; but I then discovered that even the most innocent word may don strange disguises. To Hardy forest suggested the sturdy oaks to be assaulted by the woodlanders of Wessex; and to Du Maurier it evoked the trim and tidy avenues of the national domain of France. To Black the word naturally brought to mind the low scrub of the so-called deer-forests of Scotland; and to Gosse it summoned up a view of the green-clad mountains that towered up from the Scandinavian fiords. To Howells it recalled the thick woods that in his youth fringed the rivers of Ohio; and to me there came back swiftly the memory of the wild growths, bristling up unrestrained by man, in the Chippewa Reservation which I had crossed fourteen years before in my canoe trip from Lake Superior to the Mississippi.

Simple as the word seemed, it was interpreted by each of us in accord with his previous personal experience. And these divergent experiences exchanged that evening brought home to me as never before the inherent and inevitable inadequacy of the vocabulary of every language, since there must always be two partners in any communication by means of words, and the verbal currency passing from one to the other has no fixed value necessarily the same to both of them. If this uncertainty and this variableness is obvious in ordinary speech about ordinary things, it is intensified in all discussions of art. I doubt if any two theorists ever agreed on the exact content that each of them put into *nature*. Only the men of science have succeeded in casting

out the personal equation and in achieving absolute exactness in their terminology. *Horse-power* and *foot-tons* and *kilo-watts* are instruments of precision, understandable by all who employ these terms; whereas *classic* and *romantic*, *realistic* and *naturalistic* are will-o'-the-wisps and chameleons, changing color while one looks at them.

It was at this dinner given by Gosse to Howells that I first met William Black, and I think we came together again once or twice at one or another of the gatherings of The Kinsmen. Altho we were never intimate, we were friendly enough at our few meetings. In my surprise at the unwarranted attack which Black made on Mrs. Pennell when she failed to find in his beloved Scotland the marvellous sunsets he delighted in depicting, I was moved to express in print my regret that "a British novelist had been discourteous to an American lady." I did not mention Black by name; but the cap fit and he promptly put it on, as I learned when his next novel was in course of serial publication, some one calling my attention to a caricature in its pages which was plainly tagged with a contortion of my name, "Professor Maunder Bathos." If it had not been for the indisputable label, I might have failed to find my own features in this highly colored portrait done from a distance. So keen was the caricaturist's own enjoyment in his own creation that he introduced it again into a later tale, as I have been informed. I may note also that Edward Eggleston told me that he had used me as the model for one of the least important characters in a New York

novel; and this time I could only appreciate the kindly compliment, the likeness not striking me as instantly recognizable.

## II

One object of my visits to London in 1881 and 1883 was to enlarge and to verify the information I had been collecting for years for a biography of Richard Brinsley Sheridan — information which I utilized in my edition of the 'Rivals' and the 'School for Scandal,' published in 1884. In 1881 Dobson gave me a letter of introduction to the librarian at the South Kensington Museum who was in charge of the Dyce-Forster collection, and who told me at once that he had a bundle of loose MSS. which seemed to relate to Sheridan. It did not take a long examination to disclose that these indigested notes were the work of the hireling scribe engaged to do the drudgery of research by the Dr. Watkins who had brought out two hasty and none too favorable volumes on Sheridan's career shortly after the death of the dramatist.

It was perhaps the careful search thru these unrelated and unimportant scribblings which led me to perceive that Moore had used Watkins far more often than he was willing to admit, and that he took every occasion to controvert the statements made by his predecessor, whom he sedulously refrained from mentioning in his own more wittily written biography. As a result of this desire to



discredit Watkins, Moore had failed to profit by all the facts that the earlier biographer supplied. And it was by piecing together information gleaned from Moore and Watkins both, and by interpreting their apparent contradictions, that I was enabled to solve what had hitherto been the great mystery of Sheridan's career. The solution which I put forth tentatively in 1884, has been accepted by all Sheridan's later biographers.

But I was not satisfied with what I could find in the Dyce-Forster collection and in the British Museum, altho in the latter I was able to read the manuscript of the very early farce-burlesque 'Jupiter,' in which Sheridan had collaborated with his friend Halhed, as well as to go over a then unpublished comedy, 'A Trip to Bath,' preserved in the handwriting of its author, Mrs. Frances Sheridan, the mother of the author of the 'Rivals.' I wanted also to hold in my hands the materials which the family had confided to Moore when he undertook his biography.

I knew that Sheridan's great-grandson, Lord Dufferin, was then in London; and I hoped that he might recall me as the writer of an article on the 'School for Scandal' published in an American magazine, in 1877, one hundred years after the first performance, which I had sent to him at the time, he being then governor-general of Canada. And to him I wrote again in 1883, requesting access to the Sheridan papers. In his courteous reply he asked me to call on him and suggested that I should apply direct to his uncle, Richard Brinsley Sheridan.

When I paid him a visit by appointment he told me that all the family papers were in the possession of his uncle, who lived at Frampton Court, and to whom he had forwarded my request.

A day or two later there came a cordial invitation from the grandson and namesake of Sheridan to run down to Dorchester in the heart of the Wessex that I knew only from Hardy's novels. We spent the night at a very Hardyesque inn at Dorchester, and went to Frampton Court for luncheon, when we found two other Americans, the daughter-in-law of the host and her sister, daughters of John Lothrop Motley. It was a beautiful day early in July and the lovely gardens were enticing; but while the rest of the party were strolling here and there under the trees I was secluded in the library turning over the few important manuscripts, letters, and documents that the family had recovered from Moore. From these I did not derive so much profit as from the well-nourished conversation of the host, who was intensely loyal to his grandfather's much-maligned memory, and who was helpful to the inquirer from across the Atlantic. I had a later letter from Mr. Sheridan informing me that by the death of his sister, Lady Sterling Maxwell (better known as the Honorable Mrs. Norton), he had come into possession of three large copy-books containing what appeared to be a first draft of the 'School for Scandal.' All the unpublished material in the hands of the different members of the Sheridan family was placed at the disposal of W. Fraser Rae when he was preparing the ample biography in which the dramatist-orator

was first presented in proper proportion and in his true colors.

My own biography was little more than an outline sketch, and it dealt more especially with his work as a comic dramatist. It was prepared as an introduction to the two five-act comedies, which were then for the first time supplied with notes elucidating a few of the many eighteenth-century allusions and pointing out the possible sources of certain passages. The illustrations had been drawn for *Scribner's Monthly* to accompany earlier articles of mine. Robert Blum provided dazzling pen-and-ink sketches of Jefferson as Bob Acres and of Mrs. Drew as Mrs. Malaprop; and C. S. Reinhart represented John Brougham as Sir Lucius, as incomparable in that character as Mrs. Drew was in the other. E. A. Abbey supplied portraits of John Gilbert as Sir Peter and of Charles Coghlan as Charles; and here again I am inclined to believe that never have these two parts been more truthfully and more richly impersonated. Abbey also provided a charming drawing of Mrs. G. H. Gilbert as Mrs. Candour — a character in which that otherwise admirable actress might have been expected to shine, but in which, oddly enough, she never appeared to advantage.

To round out my collection of leading actors of the present in leading parts of the past, I needed a Lady Teazle and a Joseph Surface. At my request Henry Irving and Ellen Terry were good enough to get out the costumes in which they had impersonated these opposing characters and to sit to Frederick

Barnard, who made me a most effective drawing, representing Lady Teazle rising from her chair, leaving the plausible Joseph still seated and looking up at her hopefully. When I next saw Irving I seized the chance to thank him for his kindness in going to all the trouble of costuming himself and of posing, and of persuading Miss Terry to the same effort. He waved that aside, saying lightly: "That's of no importance. But what is important is that your illustration will mislead all the future historians of the English stage on a wild-goose chase to find out when it was that she and I appeared together as Lady Teazle and as Joseph. And they are doomed to disappointment, for altho she has been Lady Teazle often and I used frequently to be Joseph, we have never played these parts with each other — and what is more to the point, we never shall. If I ever revive the 'School for Scandal' at the Lyceum, Ellen Terry will be Lady Teazle, of course, but I shall be Sir Peter."

Then he told me an anecdote of an all-star revival of Sheridan's masterpiece at Drury Lane for a benefit in which the aid was enlisted of all the sexagenarian and octogenarian celebrities of the stage who emerged from their long-earned retirement "for this occasion only" — Helen Faucit, Benjamin Webster, Mrs. Sterling, Buckstone, Compton, Farren and the rest, Irving being almost the only one in the cast who was under fifty. Lady Burdett-Coutts subscribed for a row of seats and gave two tickets to two aged ladies who rarely had the pleasure of theater-going. And when their benefactress asked them if

they had enjoyed the performance, they replied: "Oh, yes, my lady, thank you very much. But we did hate to see such a lot of wicked old people trying to get the better of that good young man, Joseph!"

### III

At the end of September, 1883, I received a note from Walter Pollock, telling me that the editor of the *Saturday Review* had resigned and that he was thereafter to be in charge of the paper; and he wanted me to become a contributor to its columns. I accepted the invitation, and during the eleven years of Pollock's editorship I wrote frequently for the *Saturday*, most frequently when I was in London for the summer, but also occasionally when I was at home in New York, reviewing American books and criticising the plays performed in the New York theaters. My first article gave an account of the visits of various British actors to the United States, a topic timely in the fall of 1883, when Henry Irving was about to come to America for the first time.

The *Saturday Review* was then the property of its founder, A. J. B. Beresford-Hope; and Pollock was the third editor in its less than thirty years of life. Its editorial office was in the Albany, where it occupied G 1, a little set of rooms on the ground floor, looking out on Vigo Street. The tradition of mystery still lingered in its management; the contributors were even supposed not to know one another;

and when we visited the editor we were shown into one or another of the tiny rooms wherein we waited in solitude until the coast was clear for us to approach the editor without danger of meeting some other member of the staff in the short, dark hall. It seemed to me that this affectation of secrecy was a little absurd; especially did it seem so when I first attended one of the annual fish-dinners at Greenwich which the proprietor was in the habit of giving every summer to all his contributors. I was present at two of these very agreeable gatherings, in June, 1885, and in July, 1886; and I think the second of these was the last occasion when the large body of *Saturday Reviewers* had the privilege of beholding themselves in mass.

I find that I have preserved not only the invitations and the bills-of-fare of these banquets, but also one of the seating plans with the names of the guests, nearly threescore and ten; and I suppose that this is a list more or less complete of those who were then contributors to the London weekly which was still a power in British politics. I read the names of Arthur Balfour and of James Bryce, but I am inclined to believe that they had ceased to write before I began. The assistant editor was George Saintsbury; and among the most frequent writers were Lang, Dobson, Gosse, Wigan, H. D. Traill, David Hannay, William Hunt, Herbert Stephen, W. E. Henley, Richard Garnett and the editor's brother, the present Sir Frederick Pollock. E. A. Freeman had only recently withdrawn from the *Saturday* for political reasons, after having been an assiduous con-

tributor for a quarter of a century; and his friend, John Richard Green, for years a most voluminous writer in its columns, had died in 1883. Altho Green was primarily a historian, he was also a very versatile man in his tastes, dashing off sparkling articles on social topics; and I was informed by one of his intimates that most of the somewhat sensational papers on the "Girl of the Period," which had enlivened the pages of the *Saturday* in the late sixties, were due to Green and not to Mrs. Lynn Lynton, who was generally credited with their authorship.

As I glance down the seating plan I am reminded that I sat between Wigan and W. R. Ralston, the leading British authority on Russian literature; and in the course of our conversation I referred to a review bearing his signature which I had read in the *Academy* and which praised a recent American book on the epic songs of Russia, and I added that I had been patriotically pleased to find equally laudatory comments on this volume in the *Athenæum* and in the *Saturday*. Ralston smilingly told me that he was responsible for those two anonymous reviews of this American book as well as for his signed article. "I did not want to write about it three times," he explained, "but I felt that I ought to do so, since there is nobody else here who takes any great interest in Russian literature. It was a good piece of work, that American book; and if I had refused to write those reviews it would have had to go without notice — which did not seem to me quite fair to the author." It struck me then that it was fortunate

for the author that Ralston had taken so favorable a view of the volume; but I also reflected that anonymous reviewing might readily put it in the power of a personal enemy to attack a writer from the ambush of half-a-dozen different journals.

The *Saturday Review* was not hospitable to outsiders; and I doubt if the editors even examined the voluntary offerings which might be sent in. The theory was that the paper had a sufficient, a complete, a regular staff, who had been invited and who had been tested by time. The editor had such confidence in his associates that he did not even read their articles until these came back to him from the printer in galley-proof. Of course, he had to arrange his table of contents for every number and to distribute his timely topics, so as to avert repetition and to secure variety. Generally I submitted the subject of any paper I proposed to prepare; but when I was three thousand miles away I sometimes went ahead and sent in my article without previous authorization. And I may confess frankly now that it was great fun for me, an American of the Americans, to say my say about American topics in the columns of the most British of British periodicals. About American politics I rarely expressed any opinion because that topic had been for years in the care of one of the oldest contributors to the paper, altho his long service had not equipped him with knowledge of the subject. Pollock called my attention once to an article on American affairs in the current number and wondered whether it was not all at sea in its opinions; and I had to answer that I



had counted fifteen misstatements of fact in the first column, whereupon he shrugged his shoulders and explained that he was powerless, since he had inherited that contributor from the preceding editors. I was told, altho I forget by whom, that the ancient light who thus devoted his mind to the misunderstanding of American politics was G. S. Venables, otherwise unknown to fame except as the man who had broken Thackeray's nose.

I think that not a few of the British readers of the *Saturday Review* may have been a little surprised by an article of mine, early in 1884, on 'England in the United States,' in which I tried to analyze the American attitude toward Great Britain; and certainly one American reader of the paper was struck by it, since it was taken as a text for an easy-chair essay by George William Curtis, who never suspected it to be the work of a fellow New Yorker.

During the first Cleveland campaign, I prepared a paper on 'Mugwumps,' elucidating the immediate meaning of that abhorrent word, which had been totally misinterpreted in England, Lang having even gone so far as to rime a ballade with the refrain, "The mugwump never votes," whereas the main objection to him on the part of the persistent partisans was that he always voted. This article led to another in which I explained for the benefit of the distant islanders a handful of other 'Political Americanisms.' And in 1886, when the late R. A. Proctor, who made a specialty of science, but who carried omniscience as a side-line, began to publish in *Knowledge* an ill-informed essay on Americanisms, I took

delight in pointing out certain of his blunders, arousing him to violent wrath and also to a belief that the corrections had been made by Grant Allen, who was forced at last to appeal to the editor of the *Saturday* for a formal letter exonerating him from the accusation.

Pollock left me a wide choice of themes and he printed everything that I sent him, excepting only one or two minor papers in which my nativity was perhaps too plainly disclosed. More than once he confided to me for review books of American authorship which I found I did not esteem highly, and these I always returned, as I was unwilling to say anything in dispraise of any fellow-countryman when I was writing anonymously in a British weekly, none too friendly toward the United States. On the other hand, I seized every opportunity to praise the American authors in whose works I delighted; and I was glad to acclaim the high quality of 'Huckleberry Finn' and of the 'Rise of Silas Lapham' when these two masterpieces originally appeared. And I had also earlier discussed at length the 'Bread-Winners,' the authorship of which was then a secret known only to a few. One of those who knew was Richard Watson Gilder, the editor of the magazine in which the story had appeared as a serial; and when he happened to mention to me the review in the *Saturday*, I made no mystery of the fact that I was responsible for it. Within a week I chanced to pass John Hay on Broadway and he waved his usual friendly greeting, then he suddenly stopped and hailed me for a minute's chat. And I was confirmed

in my conviction that he was indeed the author of the 'Bread-Winners.'

In 1894 Beresford-Hope sold the *Saturday Review*; Pollock ceased to be its editor; and the old staff ceased to contribute. It passed into alien hands and its glory departed forever. It lost its distinctive character, once for all, and it became merely one among many London weeklies, only superficially to be distinguished from each other. Upon papers like the *Nation* and the *Saturday Review* there is impressed the forceful personality of their founders, and to a certain extent that of the original staff whom the founder recruited among congenial souls; and when these founders die or retire, the papers are likely to lose their individuality soon, and in time their reputation. They may retain their names to all eternity, but the virtue has gone out of them; and they are but the empty shell of the rockets that earlier soared aloft in coruscating glory.

#### IV

It was, I think, in 1881, altho it might not have been until 1883, that I became acquainted with Charles H. E. Brookfield, who was a great friend of Walter Pollock's and a fellow-member of the Savile. Brookfield was a character-comedian with an unusual gift for suggesting varied types, partly by ingenious make-up and partly by assumption of manner. It cannot be held, however, that he was an actor of high rank, for he could not carry a play on his own shoulders, and he was better in what are known on

the stage as "bits" than in more strenuous parts. He was a member of the Bancrofts' admirable company at the Haymarket, where I saw him once as Baron Stein in 'Diplomacy,' the very British perversion of Sardou's 'Dora.' One summer when the Bancrofts were about to close the house, Brookfield subleased it for a season of his own, having found a friendly backer. "Angels," so it is said, rush in where fools fear to tread; and I doubt if the financial rewards of this summer season were as ample as the improvised manager had hoped.

Brookfield had a pretty wit of his own, and his clever sayings were current in London club circles. One of them, almost the only one that I now remember, was uttered the winter after his venture into management. One evening in the greenroom of the Haymarket, the "old woman" of the company was belauding the beauty of Mrs. Bancroft's hair, whereupon Brookfield went up to a mirror and arranged his own locks lovingly, remarking audibly: "My hair has also been much admired." And the old woman sharply inquired: "Pray by whom, Mr. Brookfield?" To which the ex-manager responded nonchalantly: "Oh, by *my* company — in the summer season."

It must have been one afternoon in the summer of 1883, when Brookfield and Pollock and I were chatting after luncheon in the smoking-room of the Savile, that the talk turned upon 'Vanity Fair.' Brookfield remarked to me very casually: "My mother has a lot of Thackeray letters." When I asked for particulars, he explained that his parents

had been very intimate with the novelist, and that his mother had preserved nearly a hundred letters to them extending over long years, and often adorned with characteristic drawings. When I inquired why this correspondence had not been printed, he replied that his mother had offered them without success to the London publisher who was the owner of the Thackeray copyrights. I knew that the law, laid down by the English court when Chesterfield protested against the publication of his letters to his son, admitted the physical ownership of a letter by the recipient while reserving to the sender the right to control publication; and I saw that the situation was a deadlock since Mrs. Brookfield could not sell her letters for publication without the permission of the owner of Thackeray's copyrights, whereas the publisher could not issue the correspondence unless she supplied him with the copy.

When Charley Brookfield went on to tell me that Miss Thackeray (now Lady Ritchie) had written to his mother a cordial approval of any publication Mrs. Brookfield might desire, I saw no reason why Thackeray's letters should not make their first appearance in the United States, where there was no recognition of the exclusive ownership of any British copyright; and I suggested that I should be glad to offer the correspondence to an American publisher, if the Brookfields would like me to do so. Charley thanked me and said he would convey my proposal to his mother.

Two or three times later in that summer of 1883 I asked Brookfield about the Thackeray letters; and I

always received the same response — that his mother was arranging the correspondence. In the fall I came back to New York for the winter; and in the spring of 1884 I went over to London again. As soon as I saw Brookfield in the Savile I once more inquired about the correspondence; and he returned an answer as before — that his mother was at work upon the letters. I returned home again in the fall, having heard nothing further. Then most unexpectedly in March, 1885, I received a cable message: "Advise publication Thackeray letters. Brookfield, Haymarket."

Thus authorized I went to Charles Scribner's Sons and explained the situation; and they told me promptly that if the correspondence was as characteristic as I believed it to be, they would gladly acquire it. They suggested that copies of a few representative letters should be sent to them for examination. When I reported this to Brookfield I received a charming letter from his mother, which I showed to the publishers, who thereafter negotiated with her directly, my labors as an intermediary being no longer necessary.

James Russell Lowell, one of the few survivors of Thackeray's friends, was persuaded to go over the correspondence and select those letters most suitable for publication. Fortified by Lowell's assistance and by Miss Thackeray's letter of approbation, the New York publishers approached the London publisher who controlled the Thackeray copyrights; and they were able to arrive at an arrangement whereby the letters chosen by Lowell appeared seri-

ally in the opening numbers of *Scribner's Magazine*, issued simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic. When at last the correspondence appeared in a volume, it revealed for the first time the high position that Thackeray was entitled to take among English letter-writers; and it confirmed the impression of sweetness and of strength, of kindness and of courage, which earlier could have been only deduced from his more formal works.

That portion of the correspondence which Lowell had selected was acquired by Augustin Daly, and after his death it found a permanent resting-place in the collection of autographs and manuscripts gathered by the late J. P. Morgan. Those letters which Lowell in his discretion thought it wiser not to publish in 1886, also came to America after Mrs. Brookfield's death. They were long a precious possession of the most ardent and devoted collector of Thackerayana, Major Lambert, of Philadelphia; and at his death they were sold at auction one by one and scattered far and wide.

## V

Altho I found at the Savile more men of my own age and of my own interests, I was glad to be a guest also of the Athenæum, where Locker caused me to be invited in 1881, 1883, and 1884. To bestow on a young American man of letters the privilege of strolling thru the spacious and lofty halls of the most dignified of London clubs was like conferring on him the power of beholding many of the men who had

made the intellectual history of England. I used to see Cardinal Manning consulting the catalog in the silent library, and to gaze at Herbert Spencer playing billiards in the subterranean vault excavated under the garden in the rear to provide a pair of little rooms for the smokers, who were not then permitted to indulge their fondness for the weed above ground. I lunched at the Athenæum once with Lang to meet Robertson Smith, the Orientalist who was then engaged in editing the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

Locker introduced me to Matthew Arnold, who consented to propose me for membership; and I may remark that the waiting-list was then so long that my name was not reached for eighteen years; thus it was only in 1901 that I had the pleasure of receiving notice of my election. When we returned home in the *Servia* in October, 1883, I was delighted to discover that Arnold was a fellow-passenger on that first visit to the America which interested him so keenly that he tried hard to understand it. I cherish the memory of the several protracted walks on the deck of the ship in the course of the voyage whereby I was enabled better to appreciate the engaging simplicity of his character. I was present at his opening lecture in New York, when his inexperience in public speaking made him almost inaudible to the majority of the audience; and I should like to testify here to the courtesy of my fellow-citizens toward a man whom they admired, proved by the fact that those who had come to hear remained seated to the end in the attitude of atten-



tion, altho they were able only now and again to guess at the trend of his discourse.

It was Locker also who made me acquainted with Alfred Ainger, the biographer of Lamb, and one of the wittiest and most charming of conversationalists. He was a friend of George Smith, the senior partner of Smith, Elder & Co., the publishers of the *Cornhill*, the magazine that Thackeray had started a score of years earlier, that Leslie Stephen had edited, and that had then been taken in hand by James Payn, with a consequent reduction both in its price and of its quality, much to the disgust of Ainger, who had an affectional regard for the monthly as it had been from the beginning. Ainger knew that Smith was also the chief proprietor of the Apollinaris Company and of the Aylesbury Dairy; and this moved him in his disappointment at the downfall of his favorite magazine to send to its publisher this merry jest: "To George Smith, proprietor of the Aylesbury Dairy, of the Apollinaris Company, and of the *Cornhill Magazine*:"

The force of nature could no farther go;  
To form the third, she joined the other two."

One reason why the waiting-list of the Athenæum was so long was because the aged members found the club a haven of rest, so quiet that "few died and none resigned." Octogenarians were common and nonagenarians were less uncommon within its walls than anywhere else. This protracted longevity of the members of the Athenæum was brought home to

me one chilly evening in 1883 when Pollock dined with me and when we were joined by Palgrave Simpson, the playwright, best recalled now by his adaptation of the 'Scrap of Paper' from Sardou's 'Pattes de Mouche.' After dinner we went down to the tiny smoking-room, dug out of the bowels of the earth, and we took chairs in front of the little fireplace, not noting whether or not there were other members in the seats which ran along the walls on three sides. Of course we talked about the stage and we came in time to consider the historic accuracy of stage costumes. I ventured to express my belief that Talma had been the first performer to garb a Roman of old in a flowing toga; this had been designed for him by David, and it demanded that he should don sandals on his otherwise bare feet. And I added the anecdote of the actress of the Français, who was so shocked by this departure from the traditional-costume long familiar to her in the theater that she cried out when her eyes fell on the actor's naked foot: "Fie, Talma, you look like an antique statue!"

Then most unexpectedly a voice from an unseen man behind us broke in: "That may be all very well. But the last time *I* saw Talma he played Hamlet in Hessian boots!"

Now, Talma had died in 1826; and here was an Englishman telling us in 1883 that he had seen the French actor more than once. Who was this belated survivor? Who could he have been? Neither Pollock nor Simpson recognized the voice; and we did not deem it polite to demand his name.

In this second decade of the twentieth century the fact that I have been in the same room with some one recalling that he had seen an actor who died in the third decade of the nineteenth century, seems to link me more closely with the distant past. It was an experience highly characteristic of the Athenæum. And I may comment here, more than thirty years after this experience, that I think the memory of the owner of this unknown voice had betrayed him, and that it was not in 'Hamlet' but in the now forgotten 'Stranger' that Talma wore Hessian boots.

On a hot evening in July, 1884, I dropped into the Athenæum to dine. It was getting late in the season, and the long dining-room was almost deserted, there being in it only two men at opposite ends of the hall. After I had given my order, one of these started to go out; it was Palgrave Simpson; he came over to me for a few words, and then went to the other solitary diner. In a moment he returned and said to me: "That is Lord Houghton over there. He is all alone this evening; and when I told him that you were an American, he wanted to know whether you would not like to take your dinner at his table?" Of course I accepted with alacrity. Simpson took me over to Lord Houghton, introduced me, and left us. I knew Lord Houghton as the biographer of Keats, as the ardent advocate of a more adequate copyright protection for authors, and as the stanch friend of the Union during the Civil War. I had seen him when he came to America in 1875, and I had been introduced to him by Locker the summer before in the Travellers Club, a fact which I did not

expect him to recall. He was then just seventy-five, but his vivacity was undimmed by years; and his friendliness of welcome to a young stranger from beyond the seas was undisguised.

I asked him if he ever intended to cross the Atlantic to see us once more; and he answered that his friends told him his best poem was 'Never Again.' He informed me that he had been one of the five members of the House of Commons who stood up for the North during the Civil War, two of the others being John Bright and Forster; and that he had always advocated cultivating the friendship of the United States. Then, perhaps in humorous explanation of his desire for amity between his country and mine, he drew attention to his own resemblance to the portraits of George Washington — certainly striking so far as the upper half of the head was concerned. He declared that Americans were then so popular in London society that Henry James had expressed dread of a reaction which might bring about a Yankee-Hetze in England as fierce as the Juden-Hetze in Germany. He relished the writings of certain American authors, Cable's 'Old Creole Days' in particular and Mrs. Burnett's 'Louisiana.' He said that Tennyson had commended to him Mrs. Burnett's short-story 'Surly Tim' and that Hallam Tennyson offered to read it aloud to them, with the warning that his father would surely break down at one part. And at the pathetic point in the little tale Tennyson did break down, the tears rolling from his eyes.

In the course of our two hours' talk I chanced'

to mention that Charley Brookfield was persuading his mother to publish the letters that Thackeray had written to her and to his father. Lord Houghton said that he had always understood that Mrs. Brookfield was the original of the heroine of 'Henry Esmond,' — an understanding confirmed when Thackeray's letters to her were printed three years later. He informed me that the Brookfields were among Thackeray's oldest and most intimate friends, and that at one time Brookfield had been very jealous of Thackeray. "But don't say I told you so!" he added suddenly; and I should not venture to set this down here if the fact had not been made plain by the letters to the Brookfields which were suppressed by Lowell, only to become public property when the second half of the correspondence was scattered abroad after Major Lambert's death.

## VI

In those successive summers in London I went far more often to the Savile than to the Athenæum; and among those whom I came to know at the younger club was William Ernest Henley. Already in 1878 Austin Dobson had told me of the ballades and other French forms which Henley was writing in a weekly called *London*, then edited by him. Dobson also informed me that *London* was printing a series of strange tales, called the 'New Arabian Nights,' written by a very clever young Scotchman, Robert Louis Stevenson. I looked up the publication-offices of *London* in some squalid side street,

and I secured a lot of the back numbers, in which I read Stevenson's fiction and Henley's rimes, not being greatly taken with the latter, which seemed to me then and now also, to lack the brightness and lightness, the unpremeditated ease and the certainty of stroke, which had charmed me in Dobson's ballades and villanelles. It is not in familiar verse that Henley was to make his mark as a poet — in so far as he did make his mark, — but in the sledgehammer assertiveness of his intensely characteristic

I am the master of my fate,  
I am the captain of my soul.

In the early eighties I saw a good deal of Henley. I attended the solitary matinee at the Prince of Wales's Theater on July 2, 1884, when 'Deacon Brodie' was first tested in the fire of the footlights. I contributed myself (and I also procured other American contributions) to the *Magazine of Art*, which Henley was then editing; and I suggested to the editors of the *Critic* that Henley might be enlisted as their London correspondent. While this engagement was pending he wrote me: "I think I can manage the work, — provided always that I'm not asked to praise Gladstone and that I can say pretty much (within limits) what I please. I'd rather like to try my hand at it anyhow." He had the chance to try his hand at it and he was not asked to praise Gladstone; but his connection with the *Critic* was finally terminated mainly because Henley in the fury of his Tory partisanship could not re-

frain from filling his letters with bitter abuse of Gladstone, abuse wholly out of place in the columns of an American periodical devoted to gentler arts than politics.

This exuberance of animosity was just like Henley. He had no assured income; he did not form new connections easily; he needed the money from this correspondence; but he could not refrain from freeing his soul in print, regardless of the editors who were employing him. He was radically uncompromising; and when Sidney Colvin got him the editorship of the *Magazine of Art*, it was with the utmost difficulty that he was made to refrain from uttering in every issue his contempt for the craftsmanship of Gustave Doré, that prolific improviser in black and white, whose books were being pushed by the owners of the review in which Henley was urgent to abuse them.

Henley was handicapped by physical disability; his mind was sturdier than his body. It was his misfortune also that in the land of his birth society is stratified, like a chocolate layer-cake, and that the man who is forceful enough to push himself up into a level above that in which he was born is likely to be made acutely conscious of his struggle in the ascent. Henley started on the lower rounds of the social ladder; he was self-educated, with yawning gaps in his equipment for criticism, and yet with superb self-confidence in the validity of his own insight. He lacked breeding; and he came to have a truculent swagger. Because he had been able to climb above the station in which he had been born,

he despised those of his own class who had not been dowered with the ability and the energy needed for the upward effort; and he reacted from his humble origin, becoming the most violent of Tories and the most acrid contemner of Radicalism. But tho he might be a Tory of the strictest sect, he seems to have been always uneasily aware that he was not accepted as a gentleman; and this irked him and gave him a distaste for the gentler qualities in general. As a matter of fact, Henley was not a gentleman when judged either by the narrow definition of the British or by the sounder standard of us Americans. In one of my later essays, I declared that a certain burly British critic "preferred Dickens, — because Thackeray was a gentleman"; and in the next letter I had from Lang he told me that he had recognized my 'allusion to Henley.'

The surprising attack that Henley made upon the memory of Stevenson was exactly what might have been expected by any one who knew Henley's fundamental honesty and his uneasy self-assertion. I doubt if Henley's article would have pained Stevenson as much as it did his admirers. After all, Stevenson was not a bad judge of character; and I think that even if he would have deplored Henley's attitude, he would understand it. I can see no excuse for Henley's attack on his friend's memory, but I can see the reason for it, clearly enough. There was danger that the more or less saintly R. L. S. painted by the careful and cautious hand of the cousin who had prepared the official biography might blot out the true R. L. S., very human and often erring,



whom Henley had loved; and I can understand how he felt it a duty laid on him to snatch the halo from the hero's head. Quite possibly, Henley's honesty was more or less stimulated by his jealousy, that all the praise should go out to Stevenson and that he should be in danger of survival only as a hanger-on to the coat-tails of departed genius. When all is said and the account is closed, none of those who knew Henley in the early eighties could fail to feel that the article on Stevenson was in all its aspects completely characteristic of its author. As E. A. Abbey, whose acquaintance with Henley dated back almost as far as mine, said to me soon after the damnatory essay appeared: "Well, Henley stood it just as long as he could, — and then he simply had to let out. He couldn't keep it in another minute!"

While I saw a good deal of Henley in those summers in the eighties, I saw Stevenson only once, altho we had exchanged messages thru Henley. I knew that his health was frail and uncertain and that he rarely revisited the club; and I doubted whether I might ever stand face to face with him. Then on the afternoon of August 3, 1886, he dropped into the Savile quite unexpectedly. For most of the two hours that he stayed, the talk was general and I can recapture few fragments of it. As the afternoon wore on, the others dropped out until Stevenson and I were left alone in the smoking-room. What I remember most vividly was the high appreciation of 'Huckleberry Finn' that he expressed, calling it a far finer work artistically than 'Tom

Sawyer,' partly because it was a richer book morally; and he wound up by declaring it to be the most important addition to the fiction of our language that had been made for ten years.

Another book that we discussed he did not hold to be so important; this was my own 'Last Meeting,' a brief novel which ought to have been a long short-story. It had at the core of it a romantic idea which I still think to have enticing possibilities for a more romantic writer than myself—the idea that the villain, after having shanghaied the hero for a long voyage, on a sailing vessel, would journey to its next port, so that he might repeat his marine kidnapping. I had sent the book to Henley with a request that he might pass it on to Stevenson; and all the news I had had of it was contained in a single sentence of one of Henley's letters to me: "R. L. S. says he wishes he'd found the shanghaing himself." So when Stevenson and I were abandoned by the others he expressed at once his interest in my idea as it was expounded toward the end of the tale. "It is a fine idea for a story," he declared; "but when you had found that, you ought to have thrown away all the earlier part of the story and have written straight up to the effect which alone made it worth while."

I knew that his words were golden; but honesty compelled me to confess that I had started with the fine idea and that if I had failed to lead up to it adequately, it was because I had mischosen my method. As a dramatist by inclination, I could never begin any narrative unless I knew exactly how

it was going to turn out and unless I foresaw its devious windings. Stevenson's sole response was to say that it was a pity I had maltreated an effect worthy of a more appropriate handling. My blunder was in putting so purely romantic a motive in a more or less realistic setting of literary life in New York with its atmosphere of superabundant small-talk. Henley had written to me that the book "is dreadfully like your talk. Not that I don't like your talk; you know very well that I do. But talk is talk, and writing's writing, and both are best in their proper places" — and this has always seemed to me one of the shrewdest and soundest of Henley's criticisms. He went on with equal wit and wisdom to object to the "crackle of cleverness" in the conversations of my characters, which affected him "like the noise of an electric spark. I got tired of you and them, as I do of a high-tuned lunch at the Savile. I long for a few flashes of stupidity."

## CHAPTER XIV

### ADVENTURES IN PLAY-MAKING

#### I

**A**T the very beginning of this personal narrative I remarked on the strangeness of the fact that I was not permitted to practise the profession for which my father had trained me and that I had never been able to attain a recognized position in the profession for which I had trained myself. From my youth up my strongest literary ambition was to write plays and to have the perilous pleasure of seeing them performed. I knew that the stern craft of play-making was far more difficult to acquire than the more relaxed art of novel-writing; I recognized that a more determined will was necessary to overcome the obstacles which bar the path of the dramatist, far more disagreeable than those which the novelist has to pass thru; and I was fully aware that the fate of a play may depend on the choice of the theater in which it is produced and on the choice of the company by which it is performed no less than upon the uncertain temper of the spectators who assemble to judge it. I was familiar with the element of sheer luck, of blind chance, which seems so often to decide the destiny of a play. I did not deny that the career of a dramatist was neces-

sarily an unending gamble, with the odds as heavily against him who essays it as those which must be accepted by the frequenter of Monte Carlo.

None the less that was the career to which I aspired, aleatory as it might be. I admitted the difficulties and dangers of the calling, but they did not daunt me. I wanted to write plays, simply because that was what I enjoyed most. I had no desire to use the stage as a platform from which to preach; I was not charged with a message for which I sought the theater as a sounding-board; and I had no lofty ideals of the poetic drama. All I wanted was the privilege of writing plays, just for the fun of it, because I got more pleasure out of the long protracted gestation, out of invention and development and construction and adjustment, than I could find in any other form of literary labor. I might turn aside from the achieving of this ambition to criticize, to devise short-stories, even to elaborate more substantial novels; but in my own eyes at least I was always potentially a playwright; and when I was telling a story, all unconsciously the shaping of this narrative was in accord with the severer principles of dramatic construction.

As I look back over more than twoscore years of literary activity I am well aware that such reputation as I may have won has been conquered in other fields than the drama; and I am no longer surprised when juvenile critics, cavilling at one of my declarations of the fundamental principles of the dramatic art, are moved to intimate that I can have had no personal experience as a practical playwright.

It is a melancholy fact that nothing fades more swiftly or more totally from the memory of men than the piece which merely rounds out a fairly honorable existence on the boards, — nothing, that is, except the piece which has met with blank failure at the beginning. The name of a dead and damned play is simply sponged out of the minds even of those who have been present when it struggled vainly for the life that was denied it.

So it is that I am not disappointed when very few even of my friends are aware that I have had half-a-dozen plays produced in New York and that two of these, 'A Gold Mine' and 'On Probation,' were acted all over the United States for several seasons, one by Nat. C. Goodwin and the other by Wm. H. Crane. While two out of the six were distinctly successful on the stage, even if they were not tumultuously triumphant, two others were less successful, perhaps on account of their own defects, and perhaps, as I confess I fondly prefer to believe, because of unfortunate circumstances connected with their several performances. The two remaining were one-act pieces, which attained to as considerable a popularity as is now possible to these diminutive dramas, the theatrical equivalents of the short-story. Partly because I have undertaken in these pages to celebrate myself and am therefore bound to discuss my adventures and misadventures in the theater, and partly because I feel that in these stage experiences of mine there may be a latent moral for aspiring playwrights of a younger generation, I have no hesitation in here setting down succinctly some

part of the brief history of these six plays of mine and also of a few others that never saw the light of the lamps.

## II

In the mid-years of the nineteenth century the English-speaking stage was a thrall of the French theater; and no stigma attached to the adapting a Parisian play to Anglo-Saxon conditions without consulting the foreign author who had then no redress against this spoliation either in Great Britain or the United States. A very large proportion of the pieces signed by Dion Boucicault and by Tom Taylor were thus filched from the foreigner, altho both these British dramatists had proved their possession of the ability to write original plays of their own, decidedly superior in value to those they were accustomed to borrow from the French. This levying on the alien, this conveying of foreign comedies over into English without so much as a by-your-leave, was almost universal in the sixties and the seventies of the nineteenth century; and even W. S. Gilbert, who shrieked aloud in pain when 'H. M. S. Pinafore' was pirated in the United States, had no hesitation either in transposing Labiche's 'Chapeau de Paille d'Italie' into the 'Wedding March,' to which he affixed his own signature, or in boasting of the profits of this exploit.

It did not occur to me when I was in my 'teens that there was anything wrong in this lifting of plays from one language to another with no consideration of the rights of the original author. I was subdued

to what I worked in; and in an earlier chapter I have told how I made two adaptations from the French, with no conviction of wrong-doing. These were both one-act pieces; and I have mentioned the single performance of 'Very Odd' by Stuart Robson in Indianapolis, and the many performances of 'Frank Wylde' by amateurs in New York and elsewhere.

My next venture, undertaken in 1874, was more ambitious; it was a version of a play by Théodore Barrière, author of the long popular piece called in English the 'Marble Heart.' The original was in three acts; and I utilized a one-act comedy of Barrière's to supply a fourth act. I called my piece 'Edged Tools' and I intended it for Daly's Theater, where another rather somber but very affecting play of Barrière's entitled 'Alixé' had won success, due in large part to the powerfully pathetic acting of Clara Morris in the name-part. I see now that the story of 'Edged Tools' was false, as well as artificial, and I am not surprised that Daly declined it in a letter which I have preserved, dated in May, 1874, and in which he said that he found my piece "admirably written, bright and crisp" but "not dramatic enough to carry the play thru." A little later the play was accepted for early production by an admirable old-school actress, Charlotte Thompson, who had recently been remarkably successful in an adaptation of a German dramatization of 'Jane Eyre.' For one reason or another she postponed the performance of 'Edged Tools,' sickening me with deferred hope, until at last she retired. By that time the taste for French pieces of the type



to which my adaptation belonged was rapidly passing, and I think I had begun to suspect the fragility of the story and to be no longer anxious to see it acted.

In those days I followed closely the Parisian stage, studying Sarcey's weekly review in the *Temps* and often consulting the criticisms in the *Figaro* and elsewhere. When a melodrama called the 'Officier de Fortune,' based on the adventures and escapes of Baron Trenck, was produced at the Ambigu in Paris in 1874, my old schoolfellow at Charlier's, Henry French (son of the theatrical publisher, Samuel French, whose yellow-backed acting editions of the standard drama still sell by thousands) was speculating in plays; and he proposed to buy this piece for me to adapt. But before we could make an offer, the play was published and it was thereby deprived of all protection by our courts, as the law then stood. As soon as a copy of the piece reached New York I adapted it. I knew that one of its chief figures had been Frederick the Great and that the French authorities, dreading the possible political consequences of the appearance of a Prussian king on the Parisian stage, had insisted that this character should become an Elector of Bavaria. I ran hastily thru Carlyle's biography and I restored the great soldier to the play from which he had been exiled by the French censors. I made many other modifications, condensing freely, since New York playgoers are less tolerant of prolixity than the Parisians. I passed over the manuscript to Henry French, who endeavored vainly to get it produced. Nearly

three years later I was present at the first night of Daly's 'Princess Royal,' in April, 1877; and I recognized the 'Officier de Fortune.' I thought I also perceived traces of my own handiwork, especially as Frederick the Great appeared frankly as himself and not disguised as a Bavarian. And a few years thereafter I was made certain of this when we were guests at one of Daly's midnight suppers in his office after the play. I took occasion to ask him if he had used as the basis of his 'Princess Royal' an adaptation he had received from Henry French. He admitted this at once; and then I told him that I was responsible for it. And his sole comment was: "Ah, I didn't know that."

In the spring of 1878 Bunner and I collaborated in a very free rendering into English of a French farce, the 'Poudre d'Escampette,' which had been fairly successful at the Variétés in Paris a few years earlier. We called our piece 'Touch and Go'; and it was an example of what the Romans used to call *contaminatio*, because we had drawn upon another French farce for more than one situation which we adjusted as best we could into the plot of the 'Poudre d'Escampette.' We had written our piece with an eye single to my old friend, Harry Beckett, the low comedian of Wallack's, an excellent Bob Acres in the 'Rivals,' and an unsurpassable Harvey Duff in the 'Shaughraun.' Beckett was highly pleased with the uproarious fun of our farce and he accepted the play on the spot. But before he could start on his starring tour his health failed, and after a brief interval his death followed.

Bunner and I offered our play to various managers and actors all in vain; and as Bunner playfully asked, "if the managers won't touch it how can the people go to see it?" Then its extravagant exuberance captivated John T. Raymond, who had solidly established himself as a star by his most felicitous Colonel Sellers in the very sketchy play that Mark Twain had made out of the 'Gilded Age.' Raymond persuaded his managers to make a contract with us and to pay us a part of the purchase price in advance, — the first money I ever earned by my work for the theater. This contract was signed in May, 1882; and as we came down the stairs of the manager's office one of us said: "Now a manager has touched it, we shall see soon whether the people will go." That, however, was something we were not to see, since 'Touch and Go' was never produced. It was announced more than once; and I think that it even got into rehearsal; yet it did not make its appearance before the public, for reasons which I never ascertained, altho they were probably the result of a more cold-blooded analysis of the manuscript, an ordeal almost always fatal to a farce because its fundamental whimsicality will rarely support the touch of the scalpel or the test of the microscope.

Only once again was I guilty of an adaptation. This was in March, 1889, at the end of Coquelin's first visit to the United States when he wanted to appear in a piece written in English. He said to me suddenly one day, "I'm going to cable to Paris for Dreyfus's 'Un Crâne sous une Tempête,' and I want

you to adapt it for me so that I can play it with Mrs. Booth." I told him that he need not send to Paris, as I already had all Dreyfus's plays and that I should be very glad indeed to turn any of them into English for him. Coquelin's choice was very happy, since there are only two characters in the little piece and the heroine is so emotional and so voluble that the hero has never a chance to speak a single word. Coquelin could converse in English if he had to; but he preferred to confine himself to French. Agnes Booth (the widow of Junius Brutus Booth, brother of Edwin Booth) was then the wife of John B. Schoeffel, who was a partner with Henry E. Abbey and Maurice Grau in the management of Coquelin's tour. She was the most brilliant actress of comedy then visible on the American stage. I called my translation the 'Silent System'; and at Coquelin's request I added to his part the few words of farewell which he desired to address to the American public on his departure for home. One picturesque incident of this performance must be duly registered here. The wife scolds the husband because he is late and because he has forgotten her birthday; and at the end he overwhelms her by producing from his pocket a jewel-box containing a bracelet, which is at once his excuse for his tardiness and his proof that he has not failed to remember her birthday. And Coquelin surprised Mrs. Booth by the gift of a beautiful bracelet which he had bought specially for her in recognition of her kindness in playing the part with him.

## III

In the fall of 1878 I wrote my first original play, a comedy-drama, ultimately entitled 'Margery's Lovers.' I wrote it for Lester Wallack, the only actor-manager in New York, in the hope that the attraction of the part I was devising for the actor might be potent enough to persuade the manager to produce it. Wallack was not a great actor, partly because he lacked intelligence and partly because he was deficient in taste. But he was an expert comedian of indisputable authority over his public. I had seen him in all his best characters and I had admired him especially in 'Diplomacy' and in 'Ours,' — altho I recognized the accuracy of Harry Beckett's criticism of Wallack's performance in the final act of this second piece — that he descended from light comedy to low comedy, only a little removed from clowning.

The character I elaborated for Wallack in 'Margery's Lovers' seemed to me to possess the kind of theatrical effectiveness which would appeal to him and which he could bring out admirably. 'It was a man born lazy yet capable of vigorous action when he saw the necessity for it. He dawdles thru two acts, uttering all the clever things I could invent, suddenly waking up at the end of the second act when the younger hero finds himself unexpectedly in a dangerous situation; and therefore in the third act he is all activity in his successful effort to clear the character of his friend, relapsing just before the

curtain finally falls into his former languor and lazily permitting the woman he has wooed to propose to him.

Wallack read the play as soon as I sent it to him, and he told me that he liked it very much. But he could not make up his mind to produce it; and after waiting eighteen months I withdrew the manuscript in spite of his surprised protest. I think that his hesitancy was due to the American authorship of the play. Wallack, altho he had been born here, was resolutely British all his days. It was said that he kept the Union Jack flying over his country home at Long Branch; and the same standard might as well have floated over his theater in New York. This, I think, was the cause of his final failure; he remained an alien in the city of his birth; and he never attained to that intimate perception of the likes and dislikes of his fellow-citizens, which is the most precious possession of a theatrical manager. He was so British in his feelings that when Bronson Howard brought him 'Drum-Taps,' afterward rewritten as 'Shenandoah,' he asked if the American playwright could not transpose this intensely American story of the Civil War and "make it the Crimea." In one of our conversations over my manuscript he bewailed that he did not understand his public. "I used to bring over all the latest London successes and to revive the old comedies and to have a new piece now and then by Dion or John" (Boucicault and Brougham); "and we got along very nicely; — but now I really don't know what they want."

I trust I have made it plain that Wallack did not

actually refuse my play and that I withdrew it from him before he could bring himself to a decision. I offered it to Daly and to A. M. Palmer, both of whom declined it, — without greatly discouraging me, since neither of them had then in his company a comedian specially qualified for the part I had cut to Wallack's measure. So in the summer of 1881 I took the play over to London and submitted it to Charles Coghlan, an actor of keen intelligence and of unusual technical accomplishment. He liked the play, or at least, he liked the part; and he recommended it to his manager, Edgar Bruce. When I had to return to America in the fall Bruce was still undecided; and when I went back to England in the spring of 1883 I found that Bruce had mislaid my manuscript and that Coghlan had accepted an engagement in New York.

Luckily I had another copy of the play with me in London and it was promptly accepted by John Clayton and Arthur Cecil of the Court Theater, where it was not produced until long after I had to return to the United States. On February 28, 1884, it had its long-deferred first performance, more than six years after it had been composed. The cast was excellent, Mrs. John Wood, Mrs. Beerbohm Tree, Charles Cartwright, Arthur Cecil, and John Clayton, who seemed to me almost an ideal choice for the character composed originally for Wallack, but who was responsible in part for the ineffectiveness of the performance, since he represented my lazy man as a sleepy man, who diffused the desire to slumber among the spectators.

Three years later A. M. Palmer began a series of Author's Matinées at the Madison Square Theater, bringing out in turn George Parsons Lathrop's 'Elaine,' Howells's dramatization of his 'Foregone Conclusion,' and my 'Margery's Lovers,' each of them having a run limited to one consecutive matinée, altho all of them were frequently repeated when the company paid a summer visit to Chicago. In these performances by Palmer's company in 1887 I was again unfortunate in the performer of the Wallack part, which was intrusted to E. M. Holland, an excellent actor in characters of a different type but not the authoritative light-comedian I had had in mind.

On the other hand, I was most fortunate in my villain, impersonated by Alexander Salvini, son of the great Italian actor. When I had finished the revision of my play, I had to confess to myself that, whatever originality I might have been able to bestow upon certain of the other characters, the villain was frankly a stage-villain quite devoid of veracity. My acquaintance with bad men has never been wide; and this bad man was not created by imagination working on observation; he was "made up out of my own head"; that is to say, he was a bald copy of the bold bad men who had intrigued and been discomfited in countless earlier plays. But Salvini took this black profile of malign intent and lent it a subtlety of color which deceived the audience into the belief that he was representing an accusable human being. In fact, one reviewer of the performance at the Madison Square singled out for



cordial commendation my invention of a novel type of stage-villain — praise that belonged of right to the actor of the part and not to the author of the play. This brought home to me what I have elsewhere called the “paradox of dramatic criticism,” — that the first-night reviewer of a new piece has to form his impression from the performance; he can see the play only thru the rendering by the performers and he can see the acting only thru the medium of the play, so that he is in danger of misjudging both the playwright and the players.

As a mere matter of record I must mention that when ‘Margery’s Lovers’ was produced in London, in 1884, a certain H. P. Stephens, librettist of ‘Billee Taylor’ and other operettas, charged that it had been stolen bodily from a play of his called ‘Hearts’ which he had submitted only two years before to Palmer and to Daly. Of course, I asserted the originality of my piece and I denied all knowledge of his, supporting my assertion with letters from Bunner and from Daly, declaring that they had read my manuscript years before the date when Stephens declared that he had written his.

#### IV

It was, I believe, in 1885 that Bunner introduced me to George H. Jessop, an Irishman of my own age, a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, where he had been a favorite pupil of Dowden’s. Jessop was a younger son of a good Irish family of Cromwellian stock; and his ancestors were the owners

of the estate in Ireland where Goldsmith had himself made the blunder of taking a private house for an inn — a blunder which served him later as the basis of 'She Stoops to Conquer.' Jessop had taken his young brother's portion in 1873 and had travelled in Europe, crossed to the United States and wandered in time to San Francisco, where he awoke one morning to the total exhaustion of his funds. After disheartening experiences, some of which he utilized later at my suggestion, in the several short-stories contained in the volume called 'Gerald French's Friends,' he was able to establish himself as a journalist. At the request of an actor who asked him to write a play with "a good Jew" as its hero, he composed 'Sam'l of Posen' in less than a week and sold it for a small sum, only to see it performed all over the United States year after year to crowded houses.

When I met him he had given up journalism for play-writing, having provided W. J. Florence, John T. Raymond and Marie Aimée with unpretending pieces that long retained the favor of the public. Thus when I became his friend his varied experience had given him a far more intimate acquaintance with stage-craft than I had had, altho my own interest in the theory of the theater was wider than his.

He came to me one day with a proposal to write a play for John Raymond, who had previously produced a piece of his, 'In Paradise,' and who had never produced my 'Touch and Go.' Jessop suggested that the play should be called 'A Gold Mine,'

and that it should present Raymond as absolutely out of money and yet trying to sell a gold mine. On that hint I spoke, suggesting that we should plan a piece a little more ambitious than a farce-melodrama of the 'In Paradise' type and that we should so construct our story that the actor might have occasion to exercise his power of pathos.

When E. A. Sothern took 'Our American Cousin' over to Paris in 1867 that he might astonish the French with his superbly caricatural Dundreary, Raymond had appeared as Asa Trenchard, playing with beautiful simplicity the pathetic scene in which he destroys the will which gives him the money that otherwise would go to the woman he loves, using the precious document to light his cigar while he is talking to her. Knowing that he had the gift of pathos, Raymond had insisted on appearing in several serious plays, to the disgust of the spectators who had come to see him in the expectation of laughter and not of tears. What I proposed to Jessop was that we should collaborate in a comedy, which would provide laughter in its earlier episodes but which would also draw tears when the audience had been duly prepared to perceive the deeper side of the hero's nature. The play in which we carried out this plan pleased Raymond immensely and he produced it in Memphis on Friday, April 1, 1887. He was then apparently in perfect health; yet most unexpectedly he died on April 10.

There is no denying that this was a sad disappointment to the two dramatists. They were soon cheered by an application for the play from Nat. C. Good-

win, who was weary of the burlesques and the farces in which he had been appearing and who believed that he, too, could personate a comic character with pathetic moments. We had to wait two years before Goodwin brought 'A Gold Mine' to New York, where it was acted at the Fifth Avenue Theater on March 4, 1889. We had not seen Raymond's impersonation of the character we had composed for him; but we should have been hard to please if we had not been satisfied by the commingled humor and sentiment of Goodwin's performance, the first in which he displayed the range and the depth of his ability as an actor. Goodwin continued to appear in 'A Gold Mine' for several years; and after he gave it up, it was often performed by stock companies in different parts of the country. It is still popular with amateurs, for whose benefit it has been printed in the inexpensive yellow-backed series of 'French's Standard Drama.'

Shortly after the play was acted in New York, a lady sued us for stealing our 'A Gold Mine' from her 'The Gold Mine.' Fortunately for us the single performance by Raymond in Memphis antedated the only performance of her piece; and it was easy for us to show also that there was absolutely no similarity between the two plays, ours being a quiet comedy with its scene laid in London, while hers was a noisy melodrama, the action of which took place in a mining-camp out West.

After Goodwin had acquired the right to perform 'A Gold Mine,' Jessop and I wrote a three-act farce for William H. Crane, which we called 'On Proba-

tion.' When it was produced in 1889, it was somewhat overshadowed by the superior success of the 'Senator,' but it had its turn later; and Crane presented it off and on for two or more years. We collaborated also in another three-act farce, contrived specifically for the Daly quartet — John Drew and Ada Rehan, James Lewis and Mrs. Gilbert. But Daly was not taken with it or at least not enough to be tempted to accept it. I told him that I regretted this, partly because I was very desirous of profiting by observing his methods of rehearsing a play. "Oh, but I shouldn't let you in!" he returned. He did not care to have his autocratic stage-directing interfered with even by the authors of the piece under rehearsal. What Daly rejected, Daniel Frohman immediately accepted, supporting his good opinion of the piece by making us a payment in advance of the royalties we expected it to earn for us. Here again we were disappointed, for our play was frankly farcical, and the more often Frohman read it and the more familiar its entangled intricacies became to him the less funny he found it; and if a farce is not funny it is a thing of naught. Here I venture to think that he erred in not abiding by his first impression, because that would probably be the impression also of the spectators beholding the play for the first time — and very likely for the only time, since we rarely care to revisit a farce, the interest of which must reside mainly in the complexity of its comic complications.

## V

For a charity performance arranged by one of my friends I wrote a little one-act comedy, 'This Picture and That,' which was represented by Henry Miller and Matilde Madison at the Lyceum Theater on April 15, 1887, and which is still occasionally acted. Mrs. Fiske used it as a curtain-raiser during one of her tours; and it was the play in which Blanche Bates made her first appearance on the stage. I had been accused of plagiarism in 'Margery's Lovers' and in 'A Gold Mine,' and I had found it very easy to show that the charge was baseless; but if a similar accusation had been brought against 'This Picture and That,' my defense would have been more difficult, altho I was wholly unconscious of any utilization of another man's ideas. Shortly after my playlet was performed I went to see Bronson Howard's 'Henrietta' and I remarked that the author gave credit to 'Vanity Fair' for suggesting to him a situation in the third act. When the curtain fell after that act I was able to perceive, altho not very distinctly, the situation Bronson Howard had borrowed; and to my dismay I recognized it as the same situation around which I had built 'This Picture and That.' I had believed, and in fact I still believe, that I had invented this situation myself; but I cannot deny that Thackeray had used it first in a novel which I had read and reread. This experience of my own makes me think it probable that Thackeray, when he described the death-bed of

Colonel Newcome, had forgotten the last words and dying speech of Leatherstocking.

I wrote another one-act comedy, a few years later, for the Theater of Arts and Letters, an enterprise which Henry B. McDowell carried on during the winter of 1892-3 and which was intended to annul the divorce between literature and the drama by coaxing men of letters into turning their novels into plays. Of course, this is a false principle; the drama is lifted up into literature only when the men of the theater develop into men of letters without ceasing to be practical playwrights. No art was ever benefited by alluring into it the practitioners of another art. If any art is ever to be raised to a loftier level this can be done only by arousing the ambition of its own practitioners.

The so-called Theater of Arts and Letters gave its performances at irregular intervals in different play-houses; I followed them all with interest and with instruction. The presentation of Mary E. Wilkins' New England tragedy 'Giles Corey' and of Stockton's 'Squirrel Inn' revealed that these two adroit and sincere story-tellers were not equipped either with the technic or with the instinct of the born play-maker. Of all the pieces produced by McDowell only three really held the attention of the friendly audiences which came together month after month in the vain hope of a new revelation. These were all one-act plays, and they were all from the pens of men more or less professionally familiar with stage-craft. One was the 'Other Woman' by Richard Harding Davis. Another was 'Harvest' by

Clyde Fitch, afterward utilized by him as the central act of the 'Moth and the Flame.' And the third was my own 'Decision of the Court,' produced on March 23, 1893, in a little theater up-stairs on the corner of Broadway and Twenty-ninth Street. As the heroine, who until the court has decided, does not know whether she is married or unmarried, Agnes Booth was as brilliant as she had been in the 'Silent System.' It was a delight to observe her certainty of execution and to hear her trained voice with its perfect clarity and its exquisite modulation.

## VI

In the fall of 1898 I was asked if I could not find a historic character around which to write a play for William H. Crane. Not long before I had seen the actor's vigorous portrayal of Sir Anthony Absolute, and this prompted me to believe that he would be a picturesque impersonator of Peter Stuyvesant as Irving had drawn the old governor in the veracious 'History of Diedrich Knickerbocker.' This suggestion was tempting to the comedian, who perceived specially the humorous possibilities of the old governor's wooden leg. I began by reading up, and I decided to invent a conspiracy of the British to seize New Amsterdam by surprise two years before the actual capture of the city, a conspiracy to be foiled by the firmness of Stuyvesant. I had so far developed my plot as to see how I could introduce three different love-stories, when word was brought



me that Bronson Howard might be willing to collaborate with me. He was an old friend of mine for whom I already had the highest regard both as a man and as a dramatist; so I went to see him as soon as I could.

He agreed to join me in writing the play on two conditions. The first was that the resulting piece should be announced as by Brander Matthews and Bronson Howard and not as by Bronson Howard and Brander Matthews. Against this I protested, since he was the older and the better soldier and his name ought, therefore, to precede mine. He was inexorable; and as the play was not to be his exclusive work, he insisted on signing his name after mine. After a vain debate I yielded, altho I was still unconvinced of the soundness of his position. Then he stated his second condition — that the material I had already gathered should seem to him promising. I outlined the conspiracy, the three love-stories, the group of subordinate characters devised to supply a background of the conditions of life in New Amsterdam two centuries ago; and to my great gratification he expressed his complete satisfaction.

We made a formal contract with each other and another with Crane; then we set to work immediately to invent the intricate details of the conspiracy and to construct the plot of the play with Stuyvesant as its dominating figure. Howard had already written one play for Crane, the 'Henrietta,' and I had written another, 'On Probation,' so we knew by personal experience the wide range of the comedian's professional ability. We were both of us aware that

he had authority, one of the indispensable elements of an actor's equipment. We had both discovered that altho his popularity rested on his capacity as a comedian, he had dignity, intensity, and pathos, all qualifications we determined to utilize. We began work together the first week in January and our play was delivered to the actor early in the summer. An excellent company was engaged for it; and after a week in Providence it was produced at the Star Theater in New York on October 2, 1899. It did not achieve the success for which we had hoped.

It is always idle to try to explain away a failure, but after the lapse of nearly a score of years I think I can spy out the reasons why our comedy-drama was a disappointment. The complexity of the conspiracy was a little too cumbrous, and already a little old-fashioned in its theatrical machinery. Then we had treated the culmination of the third act tragically instead of pathetically, because we knew that Crane was a master of tragic intensity. But this was a blunder, since we did not count on the predilections and prejudices of the spectators, who were disconcerted by the grim power unexpectedly visible in a comedian. An audience is always glad when a comic actor reveals himself possessed of pathos; but they are taken aback when they are invited to applaud him as a tragedian, however brief and infrequent these tragic moments may be.

The fault was not the actor's, for he rose to the height of the situation we had given him. No authors could have asked for a more masterly de-

lineation of the character they had conceived. The failure was ours, not his. We had also made another miscalculation. We knew what the actor was capable of doing, so we had not called upon him to reveal qualities he had never before displayed. But we had done this because we were old playgoers long familiar with his equipment, but we failed to consider that the younger generation knew him chiefly as a funmaker in farces, like 'On Probation,' and could not recall the stern veracity he had exhibited in the 'Henrietta.' The audience which gathered to see 'Peter Stuyvesant' came in expectation of laughter and of laughter only; and before word could get to the other possible spectators who would have relished our more varied reproduction of the days of the Dutch, the career of the play had been brought to an end.

To me the memory of my collaboration with Bronson Howard is most grateful. He was the most considerate of partners; — indeed, Augustus Thomas quaintly explained the non-success of our play by saying that "the collaborators had probably been too polite to each other"! Polite Bronson Howard could not fail to be, but he was firm always in insisting on that which he believed to be best. The dramatists, like all other craftsmen, work by native instinct mainly; and they do their work by reason of an intuitive endowment for their special art. Only a few of them are intelligent enough and thoughtful enough to be able to deduce the principles which have guided their practice. Bronson Howard was one of the few who knew why he did what he did and

who could always give a good reason for what he had done. It is impossible for me to overestimate the profit I derived from being taken into his workshop; and when I came later to analyze the processes of Molière and of Shakspeare as playwrights pure and simple, I found myself constantly aided by what I had picked up from the practice and the precepts of Bronson Howard.

## VII

As I look back over my experiences as a playwright, I do not see that I have any reason to be dissatisfied. Of the six plays of mine which have been produced in New York, I was disappointed only by 'Peter Stuyvesant' and 'Margery's Lovers.' The two one-act pieces had almost as large a measure of success as is possible to that unpopular form, which no longer has a place in the economy of the modern stage. 'A Gold Mine' and 'On Probation' attained a wider and a more enduring popularity than I had hoped for; — quite possibly they succeeded beyond their deserts.

If I have not established myself as a dramatist, consolidating a reputation as a playwright by a constant succession of plays one following the other, year after year, there are two explanations to be advanced, either of them adequate alone and the two together being unanswerable. The first is that whatever the value of my theatrical wares, I was never a pushing or a plausible sales-agent for them. They had to sell solely on their own merits, and I

was devoid of the necessary persistency of the commercial traveller who knows just where and just how to place his goods. I could not incessantly vaunt what I had to sell to those who were in the market for plays — actors, actor-managers, and managers. There is an indisputable truth in a remark I once heard from the lips of a successful playwright: “Any fool can write a play — but it takes a clever man to get the play acted.”

The second is that even if I myself held play-making to be my vocation, those whom I approached always supposed that it was only an avocation. For this supposition there was not a little warrant, since I was known to be writing short-stories and novels, essays and criticisms. I was regarded as a man of letters rather than as a man of the theater. Nor can I deny that I failed to give to the drama the single-hearted devotion that it demands. The art of the playwright brooks no rival and it is tolerant of only one competitor, the art of the actor. And especially is it hostile to the art to which I came in time to take an almost equal interest, the art of criticism. Many an actor and many a novelist has been also a playwright. But Lessing is the only dramatic critic who has ever proved his power himself to practise what he preached to others. Perhaps I ought to qualify this statement by saying that Lessing was the only professed dramatic critic who succeeded also as a dramatist, until a century later when Jules Lemaître repeated the feat. It is not strictly true, of course, that “the critics are those who have failed in literature

and in art''; yet it is true that the critic who has himself attempted the art is likely to be more competent, to have a keener insight into its principles and its practices, its traditions and its technic, than the critic who has never adventured himself into the studio and the stage.

## CHAPTER XV

### AMONG THE PLAYERS

#### I

**D**URING one of my talks with Eugène Nus in Paris, in 1873, he said to me that if I wanted to write for the stage I ought to go to the theater frequently — *si vous voulez faire du théâtre, il faut y aller souvent*. I recognized the advice as excellent; but I knew also that I did not need it, since I had been a most assiduous playgoer from my youth up, as I have abundantly testified in these chapters. My parents liked the theater themselves, and even when I was only a young boy they took me with them to see Edwin Booth as Richelieu and as Hamlet during his successive engagements at the Winter Garden in 1864 and 1865. When I returned from Paris at the age of fifteen I was soon allowed to go to the theater by myself. I still accompanied my parents when they went, but as they were less eager for the drama than I was I saw many performances that did not attract them. While I was in college and at the law school I became “a regular first-nighter,” as the phrase is; and there were then so few theaters in New York that attendance at all first performances was possible and not arduous. Even if this self-imposed duty

had been strenuous I should have done my best to accomplish it, as my appetite for the stage was insatiable — so insatiable that more than once I have attended five or six performances in a single week.

I think it safe to say that I have seen almost everything that was worth seeing in the theaters of New York in the half-century which elapsed between 1865 and 1915, altho I ceased to be a regular first-nighter long before the end of this period, limiting my visits to the theater to those performances which I had reason to believe would repay me. In the course of these years there are favorite plays that I have seen a score of times — indeed, I think that I must have witnessed ‘As You Like It’ and the ‘School for Scandal’ nearer forty times than twenty. I can call a long roll of Rosalinds wandering blithely thru the woods of Arden — Mrs. Scott-Siddons, Fanny Davenport, Helena Modjeska, Ada Cavendish, Lillie Langtry, Rose Coghlan, Mary Anderson, Ada Rehan, Julia Marlowe, Margaret Anglin, Edith Wynne Matthison; and it would be hard to make a final choice out of this bevy of beauties. I recollect Mrs. Scott-Siddons as thin and fragile, and Ada Cavendish as bouncing and meretricious. Fanny Davenport filled the eye with her glowing loveliness of face and figure, and she gave to Rosalind her own high spirits; but captivating as was her delineation of the most delightful of Shakspeare’s women, it lacked poetry; and poetry, ineffable grace and youth and springtime joy it was that Mary Anderson suggested. A similar womanliness, evasive and



tantalizing, characterized Ada Rehan in this part. In technical skill, in clearness of conception, and in certainty of execution Modjeska's Rosalind was incomparable, yet it was foreign, it had not the atmosphere of England; and I knew exactly what Bunner meant when he declared that Modjeska's performance would be "simply perfect — if one could first admit that Rosalind was really a pretty French widow"!

Before leaving this romantic comedy, so real even tho it is laid in a realm of fantasy and so lyric even tho it has less verse and more prose in proportion than is customary in Shakspeare's lighter pieces, I must chronicle the performance of 'As You Like It' in 1893 by the Professional Woman's League, in which every part was taken by a woman, a strange transformation for a play every part in which had been taken by a man when it had been originally acted nearly three centuries earlier by the company wherein Shakspeare himself was an actor-manager. This manifestation of feminism in the drama was made significant to me by the sturdy impersonation of Orlando by Mary Shaw and by the elocutionary effort of the aging Janauschek as Jaques.

The 'School for Scandal' I must have seen as often as 'As You Like It,' and the 'Rivals' almost as frequently. Yet I have never seen either of Sheridan's comedies with a cast that completely satisfied me. Despite the liberties he took with the text, the excision of the supersentimental Julia and Falkland, the amplification of Bob Acres, all to my mind perfectly justifiable, the 'Rivals' as Jefferson chose

to have it performed was a rich and satisfying presentation. His own *Bob Acres* was a humorous masterpiece, even if there was justice in William Warren's gibe that Jefferson presented the 'Rivals' with "Sheridan twenty miles away." Mrs. John Drew's Mrs. Malaprop was perfection itself, infinitely superior to that presented in London almost simultaneously by Mrs. Sterling. Mrs. Drew gave point to every one of her incessant dislocations of the vocabulary by the evident pride she took in that particular derangement of epitaphs. Mrs. Sterling emphasized every verbal blunder as tho she were fully conscious of its enormity; she seemed to be saying, as she stood throwing her contorted phrases straight in the faces of the spectators: "There, I'm Mrs. Malaprop, and this is a malapropism, and I do hope you will see it and roar at it!"

John Gilbert was the finest and the firmest of Sir Anthonys, as he was the final expression of Sir Peter; and William H. Crane was as vigorous and as humorous as any Sir Anthony I ever beheld, excepting only John Gilbert. But as Sir Lucius O'Trigger neither William J. Florence or Nat. C. Goodwin, actors of far more mimetic power and of a far wider versatility, ever equalled John Brougham, who found in Sheridan's Irish gentleman the one character in all his long stage career in which he had simply to suggest himself — or at least in which he had seemingly not to assume a part but merely to be what he was. This is not the only instance, even if it is the most salient, in my playgoing experience, when I have found an actor of no special ability

extraordinarily effective in some one part which he appeared to be born to play.

I must have seen almost as many Lady Teazles as I have Rosalinds; and yet far fewer linger in my memory as having succeeded brilliantly in that most brilliant part, which, sparkling as it is, does not carry the actress so completely as the simpler, more feminine, and more human Rosalind. When I run down the list of my Lady Teazles — Mrs. D. P. Bowers and Madeline Henriques, Mrs. Hoey and Mrs. Langtry, Rose Eytinge and Rose Coghlan, Fanny Davenport and Ada Rehan, Sara Jewett and Annie Russell, Lady Bancroft and Winifred Emory — I am again inclined to pick out Fanny Davenport as the one, on the whole, most satisfying; perhaps this is because I was very young when I first beheld her in the radiancy of her youthful charm, and perhaps because her youth and her beauty, her high spirits and her enjoyment of life made me credit her performance with more merit than it had.

Of the many impersonators of the more smooth and suave Joseph Surface I doubt if any one has left a more decided impression on my memory than Louis James. Of the many actors whom I have seen as his careless and reckless brother Charles, I do not know whether Charles Wyndham or Charles Coghlan gave the more incisive performance. And of course I have never seen, nor has any one else in the past half-century, any rendering of Sir Peter comparable with John Gilbert's. This was totally satisfying; there was no possibility in the part that Gilbert did not perceive and seize and bring out; and I doubt

if his personation of the character was ever surpassed even by its creator at the original production at Drury Lane nearly a century and a half ago.

John Gilbert still played the screen scene in accord with the tradition which had been handed down from Sheridan's time, a tradition now abandoned because of the amelioration of manners and the development of sympathy. Sheridan was following in the footsteps of the Restoration dramatists, as heartless as they were witty, so there is no warmth of sentiment in the 'School for Scandal' — there is no true love-scene, not even between Charles and Maria, the only pair of young people who are married off at the end of the piece. The tone of the comedy is hard and chilly; it glitters like an icicle; and when the screen falls, disclosing Lady Teazle to Sir Peter, she is greatly put out because she has been caught, and he is hurt in his pride rather than in his heart. That this was the case Gilbert indicated simply and directly, somehow managing to convey the impression that his face flushed and then paled.

That this was wholly in accord with the intent of Sheridan, we may be sure; he was writing a satiric comedy, not a play of sentiment. But nowadays we demand sentiment even in satire; and therefore when the screen falls, Lady Teazle is now discovered dissolved in tears, and when at last she speaks, sobs choke her utterance. This new attitude of the actress compels her husband to a new departure; so Sir Peter in his turn is now pathetic, overlooking the hurt to his pride in his consciousness of the pain in his heart. And this again forces another change

upon the performer of Charles, whom Sheridan calls upon to laugh at Joseph and Sir Peter and Lady Teazle, to flout them and to jeer at them one after another. To us nowadays, subdued to more sentimentalized moods, this conduct of Charles would be callous; it would be contrary to our idea as to the proper conduct of a gentleman; it would rob the actor of the sympathy of the audience. So it is that Charles, while he may still jeer at Joseph and even at Sir Peter, lets his flouting fade from his lips when he looks back at the repentant figure of Lady Teazle, like Niobe all tears.

## II

Nearly forty years ago, in one of the earliest numbers of the '*Era Almanack*,' Shirley Brooks, then the editor of *Punch*, condensed his recollections of the interesting performances he had witnessed into a list of the finest moments he associated with the names of every great actor. This list has always seemed to me to have more significance than Shirley Brooks suspected, since the moment which rises unbidden in the memory of a trained observer at the name of a tragedian or a comedian is likely to be that when the performer spoke the phrase or made the gesture or assumed the attitude which was emblematic and symptomatic of his special talent. It would help us to see in what kind of part he had been most characteristically effective; and I am therefore moved to make out a similar list of the specific

effects which have most deeply etched themselves on my memory. I have already recorded the intense impression made on me by Charlotte Cushman's "Be husband to me, heaven!" as Queen Katharine in 'Henry VIII,' and by Fechter's headsman-like attitude in the final act of 'Ruy Blas.'

From Coquelin's immense gallery it is very difficult indeed to make a choice, since so many moments, so different one from the other, come thronging forward; but I think I am justified in selecting the expression which slowly came into his face in the 'Etrangère' of the younger Dumas, when he awakened at last to the fact that the American was bent on insulting him. And by the side of this I should put the superb conceit of Cyrano as he improvises the ballade on the duel that he is actually engaged in fighting. On the other hand, the choice from Joseph Jefferson is easy, since it appears obvious that I must cite the revived Rip Van Winkle's "Are we then so soon forgot?" From Ristori I should take the stiletto look with which as Lucrezia Borgia she emphasized the name of the husband who is jealous and suspicious and threatening: "Don Alfonso d'Este, my *third* husband!" From Duse I cannot but set down here the expression of unutterable woe which descended upon her face in 'Cavalleria Rusticana' when the husband thanked her for telling him that her lover has an intrigue with his wife. From the third of the Italian masters of the histrionic art, Salvini, I recall most vividly the impulsive casting down of Iago with the foot raised as if to stamp him to death. It is a gesture

once more that rises before me now when I seek to evoke the most characteristic specimen of Sarah-Bernhardt's novel and inventive technic—the successive jerks of feverish impatience with which Frou-frou tears the fringe from the sofa-cushion in the big scene with her sister, whose unthinking unselfishness is bringing disaster to both of them.

My earliest recollection of Booth is the instant where Richelieu draws the awful circle of the church around the ward he is protecting; and my latest is the malignant dance of Bertuccio when the Fool believes that he has attained his Revenge. Irving I saw first in Alberry's once blooming but now long faded 'Two Roses'; I can still hear the crisp utterance which accompanied his presentation of "A little check!" From his later impersonations I find most vivid the salient profile of the red figure of Mephistopheles in the mad revels of 'Faust.' Nor is there danger of erring if I pick out for Ellen Terry the sparkling gaiety of her Beatrice, when she declares that "a star danced, and under that I was born." So it is not difficult for me to declare that what I recall with most certainty out of all Mary Anderson's poetic impersonations of poetic heroines is the grace and abandon of Perdita's entrancing dance with Florizel in the springtime of their young love. Clara Morris, a most unequal actress of rich native gift hampered by lack of taste and by defects of early training, gave me a thrill of horror when I began to perceive in the heroine of 'Article 47' the symptoms of incipient insanity which she managed somehow to convey to us all at that first per-

formance by a slow working of her body to and fro while her eyes were set in a deadly stare.

From the repertory of Ludwig Barnay, the most gifted and accomplished German actor it has ever been my good fortune to know, I could not but single out the piercing look of inquiry with which Mark Antony sizes up the crowd in the Forum around Cæsar's body, to see whether it is time for him to play his trump-card and to produce Cæsar's will. From the repertory of Mrs. Fiske I should take the nervous chill of Tess of the D'Urbervilles after she returns with the bloody knife in her hand. From Agnes Booth I should have to give the whole of that long soliloquy in the 'Engaged' of W. S. Gilbert, a soliloquy the delivery of which was punctuated by intermittent biting into the tart she was slowly devouring, a soliloquy so long that Mrs. Booth broke it into three and hid its extreme length from the audience, who listened to it with the keenest enjoyment. And I may end by adding that to me at least nothing that Nat. Goodwin ever did was truer in its simplicity, more unaffectedly pathetic, than his final words as the curtain fell on the second act of 'A Gold Mine': "Well, it was worth it!"

When I seek to set by the side of these single effects of individual performers a corresponding list of performances in which every part was so appropriately played that the total impression was absolutely satisfying, I must begin by leaving out a dozen or a score of the representations of the Comédie-Française which I accept as impeccable beyond cavil. 'Ruy Blas' with Mounet-Sully and Coquelin and



Sarah-Bernhardt, before her golden voice had been worn and before her manner had degenerated into mannerism — this is one of them; and another is the 'Etrangère' with the splendor of its original cast, exceptionally splendid even for the Français. Far less glittering in its individual impersonations and yet most admirable as a whole was 'Julius Cæsar' by the Meiningen company as I beheld it at Drury Lane in June, 1881, with Mark Antony impersonated by Barnay, about whose perfect adaptation to the part there could be no dispute.

Of performances seen in America I am inclined to single out three. The first in point of time is the production of 'Henry V' by Charles Calvert at Booth's Theater, with George Rignold as the young King and with all the host of character parts which give variety to Shakspeare's loose-jointed and undramatic history vigorously individualized. The second, again in chronological order, is the 'Taming of the Shrew' when Hamilton Bell designed the costumes and when Daly's company was rich in comic actors of both sexes, headed by the superb quartet whose team-play was unerring — Ada Rehan, John Drew, James Lewis, and Mrs. Gilbert. For the third and last I must choose the 'Thunderbolt' as that piece was acted by the company of the New Theater to be dissolved forever only a few months later. I doubt if our modern stage has seen any modern play more artistically performed than was Pinero's masterpiece under the direction of Winthrop Ames, or more harmoniously represented in all its quieter details as well as in all its intensely dramatic moments.

## III

A performance like that of the 'Thunderbolt' at the New Theater in 1911, reflects high credit upon the manager, who after all is the man ultimately responsible for it, since he has chosen the several members of the company and has selected also the stage-manager, the art-director, and all the other junior officers whose combined efficiency makes possible a performance as perfect as this. Few of the historians of dramatic literature in the past and few of the theatrical critics of the present have perceived the immense importance of the manager, or have noted how few managers there have been in the theaters of Great Britain and the United States who have impressed their individualities upon the drama. The manager of recognized ability is far rarer than the actor or the dramatist of equal equipment; and actors and dramatists of high repute have failed dismally when they undertook theatrical management. David Garrick, successful as an actor and successful as a dramatist, was triumphantly successful also as manager, whereas Sheridan, who succeeded him in the control of Drury Lane, was lamentably unsuccessful. Edwin Booth built a theater for himself in New York and, from lack of business capacity, he allowed it to slip from his lax control.

On the other hand, Augustin Daly had a managerial career of more than thirty years, full of vicissitudes, no doubt, broken in the middle by failure, and

yet filled with valiant effort, strongly individual, and incessantly interesting. I was a friendly spectator of the whole of Daly's managerial struggles, in at least four different playhouses in New York; I even chanced to witness certain of his ambitious forays into foreign countries. For instance, I was present at the Vaudeville Theater in August, 1891, when he permitted the Parisians to gaze in amused amazement at 'As You Like It,' probably the first time that Shakspeare's comedy had ever been acted in English in the French capital. And I had previously been one of the friendly Americans in London in July, 1884, when he first introduced his company to the British public, an occasion on which I was enabled to calculate the time-reaction of Londoners toward an American joke. The piece was, so I seem to recall, 'Seven Twenty-Eight,' or one of Daly's other free Americanizations of German farces, and as it was familiar to most of us American visitors to London, our laughs followed swift upon the utterance of every merry jest on the stage; then there would be a brief interval of silence; and finally the main body of the British audience apprehended the exotic joke and laughed in platoons.

Daly had his own views about everything, and he insisted on carrying them out. He did not hesitate to rearrange Sheridan and Shakspeare to accord with his own whim. His taste was often at fault and his judgment was sometimes at sea; but no man ever lived who was more intensely absorbed by his special art. He lived in the theater and for the theater; and as a direct consequence of this, what he did in

the theater was unfailingly interesting, even when it was most wrong-headed. He had inexhaustible energy and boundless ambition. He hoped to make his theater an American equivalent of the Comédie-Française, with a permanent company and a repertory of standard comedies in stock and always on hand. For several winters he had subscription Tuesdays, at which the same audiences gathered week after week. He always sent me invitations for these performances; and he often also sent me a complimentary pass for the season, admitting me whenever I might care to drop in.

He liked to celebrate himself or at least to celebrate the company of comedians whom he kept together year after year; and in 1887 he asked me to aid him in editing 'A Portfolio of Players,' to contain a score of photogravure portraits in character of his leading performers, for which Hutton and Bunner, William Winter and I prepared vignettes of appreciation and for which Bunner rimed a witty epistle to 'A Playgoer of the Twentieth Century,' a copy of verses appropriately serving as an epilog. In the course of our meetings to arrange this volume he said to Hutton suddenly: "How is it that I haven't seen you at the theater lately?" Hutton explained that he had married and that he found it therefore more expensive to go to the play. "But didn't I send you a season ticket?" Daly inquired. "Yes," Hutton responded, "but I'd pay for four seats any time rather than face your father-in-law with a pass in my hand."

Daly laughed, for he knew John Duff's detestation

of all deadheads, which was perhaps the reason why he had stationed his father-in-law by the side of the ticket-taker. The story is told that a lively little man once asked for a pass and was referred to Duff, whose huge bulk towered on the top of the steps behind the railing. "Mr. Duff, do you pass the profession?" was the lively little man's question. To this Duff responded with another query: "And what might be your connection with the profession?" Whereupon the lively little man proclaimed himself to be "the lightning ticket-seller down to Barnum's circus!" Duff looked down on him and then pointed to the box-office, saying: "Then let me see how quick you can buy one!"

Here occasion serves for a personal explanation. At least I claim the right to interrupt my own narrative by rising to a question of privilege. There is now in circulation an anecdote which has somehow attached itself to my name to the effect that I once attended the first performance of a play on the invitation of its author. Perhaps I had better cite the rest of the story from the Liverpool newspaper where I last saw it. "At the end of the first act there was a chilly silence among the audience, but Mr. Matthews applauded, as in duty bound. At the end of the second act the audience hissed, while Mr. Matthews kept a troubled silence. At the end of the third act Mr. Matthews went out and paid for his seat, and came back and hissed with the rest." Now this is a good story and I regret that I have no right to appear as the ingenious hero. I cordially agree with the late Adrian Joline, the

autograph collector, that "jokes ought to be registered, so as not to be transferable to bearer."

I was a witness also of the managerial career of A. M. Palmer, who resigned the librarianship of the Mercantile Library to take charge of the Union Square Theater, going on later to the Madison Square and finally to Wallack's. And I observed with an even acuter interest the rise of Harrigan and Hart, who came forward first with a song-and-dance at the Theatre Comique, and who slowly and steadily broadened the scope of their little act, until the 'Mulligan Guards' Parade' was in due season succeeded by 'Squatter Sovereignty,' which survives in my memory as Harrigan's best play, the one in which he most satisfactorily revealed the possibilities of the special kind of piece he had devised in the course of years of experiment. He recruited his company from the variety-shows, from the performers who were accustomed to present fixed types, the stock Irishman, the stock German, the stock Chinaman, the stock negro. Then he called upon these actors of limited range to bring out more sharply the differences in character which exist within the stock-type. Harrigan not only had a keen eye for character, as he had studied it in the tenement-house neighborhoods, he was also a most skilful stage-manager. No one who ever saw the separate entrances of the clan Murphy and of the clan Macintyre in 'Squatter Sovereignty' can forget the delicate discrimination of these two groups of Americanized Hibernians.

Here was acting of a delightful kind within its rigid limitations; no wonder it won high commenda-

tion from Howells, among other critics. This hugely disgusted John Gilbert, who once expressed to me the surprise of a highly trained actor that these variety-show impersonations of fixed types should be so warmly praised for their restricted art. Coquelin was more open-minded; and when I asked him in 1888, on his first visit to America, to see Harrigan in 'Waddy Googan,' he appreciated the special quality of the play and of the performance, saying that it had a flavor of its own: "*C'est quelque chose de très-particulier.*"

At Harrigan's request I took Coquelin behind the scenes and introduced him, discovering to my surprise that Harrigan could speak French. In fact, his understanding of the foreign tongue was more thoro than Lester Wallack's, if I may judge by a slip of the latter in a talk he had with me after I had published an article on the Comédie-Française in which there were portraits of the two Coquelins, labelled respectively "Coquelin Aîné" and "Coquelin Cadet." Wallack remarked to me that he had been talking with Boucicault about this article, adding that "Dion says that the younger Coquelin aîné is the better actor." The blunder in French was Wallack's own, even if the blunder in criticism was Boucicault's. And perhaps this is as good a moment as any that I am likely to find in these pages, to set down another blunder of another manager who was hesitating over a play of mine. "I like the people in your piece and the talk is excellent," he said, "but I don't much care for the plot. Can't you use those characters and that dialog in another story?"

## IV

In the last thirty years of the nineteenth century the most prominent actor-manager in Great Britain was Henry Irving; and in my successive visits to London and in his successive visits to New York I was enabled to see him repeatedly in all his more prominent parts. He had a compelling personality as an actor and nothing that he did was negligible. He had the grand style, in spite of the mannerisms of his walk and of his utterance. He used his taste, his skill, his inventiveness as a stage-manager to set off his achievement as an actor and to supplement and even on occasion to disguise his histrionic limitations.

He was large-minded and liberal, as he proved when he invited Booth to join him at the Lyceum and to alternate with him as Othello and Iago. This was truly generous, since Irving was prosperous at the time, and Booth's London engagement had not been successful. It was perhaps even more generous than Irving himself suspected, because Booth was a tragedian who could rise to Othello, altho he was perhaps even more effective in the character part of Iago, whereas Irving was essentially a performer of character parts and lacked the massiveness and the sweep which tragedy demands.

To my great regret I did not arrive in London that summer until after the twin stars had ceased to shine simultaneously. But from a friend in the Lyceum company I heard how Irving had deferred



in every way to Booth, only to discover that the American was only too glad to let his British friend carry all the burden of stage-management. Irving himself set so much store by meticulous exactness in detail that he was perturbed to find that Booth felt himself to be wholly independent of its assistance. He could not quite understand Booth's attitude in relying entirely upon his sheer power as an actor. A keen and competent critic of acting, Gordon Wigan, gave me an unbiased opinion of the two memorable performances, declaring that nothing could be more delightful than Booth as Othello and Irving as Iago, whereas the next evening when the characters were exchanged the result was most unsatisfactory, since Booth as Iago simply extinguished Irving as Othello, a part for which the British actor had not the physical qualifications.

When Irving paid his first visit to America we made him a Kinsman, and with his usual liberality he immediately presented to every other Kinsman a "bone" for the Lyceum in London — an engraved ivory token admitting any one of us at any time to his theater. At one Kinsmen supper in April, 1884, I had the good luck to be seated between Booth and Irving; it was grateful to observe the cordiality of their friendship, in spite of the fact that they were necessarily professional rivals. When they fell to discussing the great actors of the past, I sat silent, listening to each in turn; and I watched to see whether either of them had really read up the history of his own art, something which artists rarely do, contenting themselves with the practice of

it. I soon saw that Booth's filial devotion to his father had led him to learn all he could about his father's rivals, especially the foremost of them all, Edmund Kean, and that he had therefore been lured into wider reading about the Kembles. I saw also that Irving was not at all familiar with the histrionic history of his own country, and that he neither confessed his ignorance nor pretended to knowledge that he did not possess. He let Booth talk, and from time to time, threw in an anecdote that had come to him by oral tradition. I recall this as a remarkable exhibition of perfect poise and self-control in self-defense. And what I noted that evening confirmed in my mind the truth of the current rumor that Irving did not himself compose the addresses and the articles which he signed.

Of this I had further corroborative evidence later. At different times Irving lectured at Harvard on 'English Actors' and at Columbia on 'Macbeth,' and he also contributed occasional articles on the art of acting and on Shakspeare to the magazines. I do not doubt that the opinions herein expressed, the main points, were Irving's own; but the looking up of quotations and the ultimate literary expression he confided to a confidential secretary, following the example of those members of Parliament and of Congress who have their speeches written for them. Irving's confidential secretary was a man named Louis F. Austin, who wrote a book about his employer which he signed with a pen-name, "F. Daly." In London only a few months after our Kinsmen supper I was dining with a friend, who showed me the

title-page of one of Irving's addresses with this legend written boldly across it: "To my friend ———, with the compliments of the author, Louis F. Austin." This seemed to me then, as it seems to me now, a contemptible example of treachery to a generous master.

If Irving had ever known this I cannot but think that it would have pained him, altho he was a magnanimous man and altho he had a sense of humor sufficient to permit his enjoyment of a joke on himself. One of these jokes on himself I heard from his close friend Walter Pollock. Irving won his first success as Hamlet while the Lyceum was still under the management of "Colonel" Bateman; for several years before Bateman took the theater it had been devoted to comic opera. As the dramatic critic of the *Saturday Review*, Pollock had attended the first performance of 'Hamlet,' but before writing his article he went again later in the week and he found himself by the side of a lank Dundrearyish man who became increasingly restless as the first act progressed. When the curtain fell, he seemed at a loss what to do; but finally he turned to Pollock. "I beg your pardon," he began, "but do you know this play?" Pollock admitted his familiarity with the piece. "Very well, then," was the relieved reply; "perhaps you can tell me if that tall, thin young man in black appears again?" Pollock responded that the tall, thin young man in black was the chief personage in the play and would therefore appear very frequently. "Ah!" said his neighbor, disappointed in the burlesque he had expected to find at that

theater. "Ah! Then in that case I'm off!" And he took his hat and departed. And Pollock went back to Irving's dressing-room and told him, altho I cannot be sure that the actor's laughter was either hearty or sincere.

## V

It has often been pointed out that great actors rarely do anything for the drama of their own language in their own time, preferring to measure themselves with their mighty predecessors in the great parts of the great plays of the past. It was said of John Kemble that he thought all the good parts had been written. Coquelin is the most obvious exception to this general rule, for he created a host of characters in plays by his contemporaries even if he won his major reputation by his performance of the characters Molière had composed for his own acting. Neither Booth nor Jefferson was ever on the lookout for new plays; and altho Irving brought out more novelties than either of the Americans, no one of these has established itself in the theater now that it is no longer supported by his authority, not even the 'Becket' of Tennyson or the 'Charles I' of W. G. Wills. It has even been suggested, and with not a little show of reason, that the contemporary drama is likely to languish when the stage is occupied by actors of commanding power and that it is only when the actor cannot domineer over the playwright that the contemporary drama has its chance to expand and to reveal the best of which it is capable.

But if Edwin Booth did nothing for the drama of his language, he did a great deal for his profession. He founded The Players, a club intended primarily for the actor, the dramatist, and the manager, where they might mingle at ease with the practitioners of the allied arts of literature and music, painting, sculpture, and architecture. Booth had long been considering a gift for the benefit of his calling. Edwin Forrest had left his house and his fortune to shelter superannuated members of the profession; but Booth preferred to make provision for the actors while they were still on the stage. He consulted his friends, Lawrence Barrett, E. C. Benedict, and Thomas Bailey Aldrich. It was on Benedict's yacht that he finally decided to establish a club; it was Aldrich who suggested its name. Booth communicated his intention to Daly and to Palmer; and early in 1888 Daly gave a luncheon to which he invited the organizers of the new club — and on the back of my bill-of-fare I find the autographs of Lawrence Barrett, William Bispham, Edwin Booth, S. L. Clemens, Augustin Daly, Joseph F. Daly, John Drew, Harry Edwards, Laurence Hutton, Joseph Jefferson, John A. Lane, James Lewis, Brander Matthews, Stephen Henry Olin, A. M. Palmer, and William T. Sherman.

Thereupon Booth bought 16 Gramercy Park; and Stanford White altered it and decorated it so skilfully and so tastefully that it looked friendly and homelike on the night of its opening — the last night of 1889, when the donor read his deed of gift and The Players took possession of their future

abode. In view of this project Booth had long been gathering portraits of actors, and he had purchased a similar collection made by his brother-in-law, John S. Clarke. The histrionic gallery of *The Players* is now worthy of comparison with that of the Garrick Club in London, which possesses no finer portrait than the picture of Booth himself, painted by John S. Sargent and presented by E. C. Benedict. Among the paintings that Booth had acquired was a portrait of Washington, but he hesitated to give us this with the others because it seemed out of place. He expressed this doubt to Aldrich, who instantly replied: "I see no objection to putting Washington by the side of the actors. He was our Leading Man!"

As a member of the committee on literature and art I helped to arrange the books given to us by Booth and by Barrett; and I found wall-space in the hall for a long sequence of engraved portraits of the English Kings which had served Booth in his performances of one or another of Shakspeare's historical plays. I told the man who was putting up the rails to accommodate these prints to arrange them in chronological order; and when I saw them on the walls I perceived that he had misinterpreted this direction. He had put them in alphabetical order, the four Georges preceding the eight Henrys, with the four Williams bringing up the end of the procession.

From the very beginning the new club justified the hopes of its founder. In it, amid congenial associations, he spent the last years of his life. In it at last he died, in the room which is kept just as it was

when he was seized with his final attack. From the very beginning The Players had an atmosphere of its own which has endured for now a quarter of a century. It has its genial traditions and it has fulfilled its founder's purpose. Perhaps some part of its charm may be due to the gentle influence of Booth himself, surviving year after year. A British actor who had been a guest of The Players for a month once put this into words, "I don't see how it is here," he said, "but you seem to be different. On our side we talk about Irving or Henry Irving, but here you generally speak of the man who gave you this club as Mr. Booth." I had not before noted that this was our practice but I recognized it immediately as an instinctive tribute of involuntary respect.

## VI

It is sometimes asserted that actors are a curiously self-centered race of beings, often unduly conceited and even vainglorious. William Archer has suggested as an explanation that the circumstances of his art compel the comedian and the tragedian to persistent thought about his own person, since he has always to live in a room lined with mirrors. Whatever justice there may be in the charge against certain members of the profession, I should like to put on record here my firm conviction that it does not lie against the leaders of the craft whom I have had the privilege of knowing intimately. Booth and Irving, Jefferson and Coquelin and Barnay

were as little forthputting or self-valuing or intolerant as any men I have ever met. I do not mean to suggest that they were not severally conscious of their respective positions at the head of their profession. That knowledge they could not fail to possess. But they were none of them grudgingly jealous, as Macready disclosed himself to be in his diary; they were not self-assertive, being preserved from this by their indisputable eminence. In their several ways they were all modest, with a modesty not frequently found among artists in whatever art.

With no lack of the self-confidence necessary to their achievement they seemed to be simple-minded and without pretense. Perhaps this simple-mindedness was a little less evident in Coquelin and in Irving than in Booth and in Jefferson. Nothing could be more modest than a remark Jefferson once made to me after he had been praising his half-brother, Charles Burke, the original performer of *Rip Van Winkle*: "If my brother Charley had only lived, the world would never have heard of me!" This modesty did not prevent Jefferson from having the courage of his convictions. He knew what he liked and he knew why he liked it. I heard him say that the performance of Weber and Fields and Sam Bernard in the famous "skindicate" scene in one of their conglomerates of music and fun, was the finest piece of comic acting he had seen in New York that winter. On the other hand, he did not relish the ultra-veracity of '*Cavalleria Rusticana*' as this was revealed by Duse and her excellent company on her first visit to America. He deplored



the lack of a more poetic atmosphere for the tragic story. "It's altogether too realistic," he declared. "Why, you could count the fleas in that Italian village!" I ventured to suggest that if it had been a real Italian village, he could not have counted the fleas. "What I mean is that there was no romance about it," he continued; "that girl wasn't seduced in the moonlight. She went into the barn."

I regret now that I could not have capped this with the witty remark of another friend to the effect that "Duse overacted her under-acting." The quip had not then been uttered; but I have no doubt that Jefferson would have adopted it, if he could have heard it.

During one of Coquelin's engagements in New York a supper was given to him in the private dining-room of The Players; and I chanced to sit side by side of the leading man of the French company. The next time I saw Coquelin, he asked my opinion of the performer. "Well," I responded, "he is a good enough actor, but I did not find him very intelligent." And Coquelin instantly returned: "But he has the intelligence of his profession. That is all any artist really needs in his calling, whether he is actor or musician or painter. Take Meissonier, for example, our greatest painter. Well, he is an old chump! — *c'est un vieil ganache*." This explains our frequent disappointment when we meet a practitioner of any one of the arts, whose work we have admired and who strikes us in conversation with him as less richly endowed than we had expected. We had looked for general intelligence, whereas

all the artist had was the specific intelligence of his profession, the native gift for his own art. On the other hand, the chiefs in any calling are likely also to possess a full share of general intelligence. Coquelin himself abounded in it, and so did Jefferson, as I had the privilege once of observing on a particular occasion.

When Booth died we elected Jefferson as the president of The Players. I was then a member of the Board of Directors, and we soon observed that our new presiding officer was wholly inexperienced in parliamentary procedure. We had to remind him to put the question and to declare the result of our votes. Unpractised as he was, his native shrewdness stood him in stead of experience. At one of our meetings we had to face a very awkward situation, complicated by the personal relation of two members of the Board with an absent member whose wilful negligence of duty called for discipline. The matter was brought before Jefferson, who knew nothing at all about the facts; and it was a delight to see the clearness and the certainty with which his mind worked as he slowly possessed himself of all the details. When we adjourned after our hour of painful tension, one of my associates as a director, who was one of the younger leaders of the bar, said to me on the stairs: "Did you see what the old man did? He deduced the governing principle and applied it unerringly to a set of facts wholly novel to him. That is the faculty we need in the members of the Supreme Court — and don't always get!"

Besides this keen intelligence, Jefferson also had

a quick wit. In the last years of his life we gave him a reception at the Authors Club, at which he made a felicitous address partly about the art of acting and partly about himself, ending, as was his wont, by expressing his readiness to answer any questions that might be put to him. In the hope of heading off futile queries about the Baconian hypothesis, I rose and asked him what had been his most unfortunate experience on the stage. He told us that he had had more than one that he did not like to remember, but that perhaps the saddest was when he was put forward at the early age of five to sing the 'Star-Spangled Banner' and when the words of the second stanza escaped from his memory. When he had made an end of his amusing story, another member of the Authors inquired what had been the pleasantest experience of the actor's life, whereupon Jefferson smiled that winning smile of his and at once replied: "Why, this reception this evening, of course!"

## CHAPTER XVI

### ADVENTURES IN STORY-TELLING

#### I

**D**URING these years of occasional play-writing and of continuous playgoing I was plying my trade as a man of letters, laboring in a variety of fields. I did not cease writing book-reviews for the *Saturday Review* until 1894 and for the *Nation* until 1895; and I continued to contribute irregularly to the *Critic*. Papers of mine on divers topics appeared in different magazines. For a series in the *Forum*, for example, I prepared an article on 'Books that have helped me.' Probably I took the theater as a topic more than any other; and in 1894 I gathered into a little book half-a-score of my 'Studies of the Stage.' This tiny tome was uniform with a volume issued a year or two earlier, called 'Americanisms and Briticisms with Other Essays on Other Isms,' in which I had collected my earliest inquiries into the verbal niceties of our language, as it is spoken and written in the United States and in Great Britain.

In 1895 I sent forth a volume entitled 'Book-bindings Old and New: Notes of a Book-lover,' wherein I sheltered essays on different aspects of the bibliopegic art as I had studied it in the libraries of London and Paris and at the successive inter-

national exhibitions on one side or the other of the Atlantic. I fear that the bibliophiles of the strictest sect would deny my right of admission to their ancient brotherhood, because I have always been more interested in the insides of books than in the outsides. Yet even if I am excluded from the fraternity I have found profit in my diligent inquiry into the practices of the leading masters of the bookbinder's craft, living and dead; and this investigation proved to be more fertile than I had expected when I drifted into it, because it made plain to me, as nothing had done previously, the irrefragable interdependence of the decorative arts, any one of which is likely at any moment to influence the development of any other. It instructed me as much as it amused me to trace the appropriation of patterns from oriental tiles for the book-covers of the Italian Renaissance and to observe the borrowing by the French binders of the eighteenth century of motives originally devised by the contemporary craftsmen in wrought-iron.

In this same year, 1895, I was lucky enough to be awarded the second prize in a contest for a detective-story. The first prize was taken by Miss Mary E. Wilkins, who founded her tale, the 'Long Arm,' on the unsolved mystery of the notorious Borden murder. My own effort was less sanguinary, as it dealt only with the exposure of the purloiner of an intangible object. In other words, the thing stolen was a business secret; and I so arranged the incidents of my narrative that the thief should be identified by a camera concealed in a clock and

taking every ten minutes a photograph of the safe in which the private papers were sheltered. I called my short-story the 'Twinkling of an Eye'; and plumed myself not a little on the novelty of my device. But my pride had a fall, shortly after my narrative had appeared in a heterogeny of Sunday papers, when I received a letter from a midwestern correspondent informing me that he had made use of precisely the same expedient to catch the unknown robber of his cash-drawer. I accepted this as added evidence that fact is likely always to keep ahead of fiction and that the ingenuity of a story-teller is certain to come off second best in any competition with the infinite resource of the practical world. In the case of the 'Twinkling of an Eye' I had at least the satisfaction of ascertaining that I had invented my fiction, even if it had not appeared in print before it came into existence as an actual fact.

Perhaps I may permit myself here to mention another invention of mine, more strictly within my own field as a man of letters. It was, I think in this same year, 1895, or in the year after, that I received a visit from a book-canvasser who believed that there was money in a series of volumes containing extracts from the great writers of all languages and all countries. In going from house to house selling subscription-books he had come to the conclusion that a comprehensive anthology of prose and verse in twenty or thirty substantial volumes would be purchased by a very large number of fairly well-to-do Americans who would accept

this series more or less as a substitute for a bookcase filled with miscellaneous volumes. It was to provide good reading in all departments of literature and it ought also to be available constantly as a work of reference.

My visitor told me that he had submitted his project to a publishing house, which had taken it up eagerly; and he was now in search of an editor. He had approached Charles Dudley Warner, whose hesitation he hoped to be able to overcome. As the scheme was set before me it was rather shadowy; and neither its originator nor its future publishers knew exactly what they wanted, altho they had already employed compilers to select appropriate extracts. I told the canvasser that he needed a clear plan for the whole undertaking and any money would be wasted which was spent before a definite prospectus had been drawn up. To this he answered that he had come to me in the hope that I would prepare an outline on which they could get to work at once. He explained he knew how to sell books, but he did not know what to put in the books he was going to sell; he complimented me by calling me an expert in literature and as such I was invited to give my professional advice. The project seemed to me promising and I informed him that I was quite willing to draw up a proper plan if I could be assured of a proper fee for my services, such as a lawyer would charge for his opinion or a physician for a momentous consultation. I named a modest figure, which was accepted without protest; and the next week I met the canvasser, the publishers, — and

also Warner, who had decided to accept the editorship if he could find out exactly what he was expected to edit. It was at this conference that we came to a clear understanding as to the content, the scale, and the appropriate contributors to the bulky series of tomes which constituted Warner's 'Library of the World's Best Literature.' The plan accepted that afternoon was amplified as the work progressed, but it was not modified, that is to say, it was never materially departed from; in fact, it has since served as the model for half-a-dozen similar ventures. Warner invited me to be one of the advisory board; and at his request I prepared the introductory biographical criticisms of Molière, Beaumarchais, and Sheridan.

## II

I have grouped together in the foregoing paragraphs several varied literary activities, so that I might deal consecutively with my contemporary writing of fiction. I have already spoken of my earlier short-stories and of the 'Last Meeting,' which was a rather brief novel when it ought to have been a rather long short-story. The 'Last Meeting' had been published in 1885; and for the next half-dozen years I confined myself to short-stories, still composed more or less under the influence of the clever and artificial tales of the author of 'Marjory Daw.' Then quite unexpectedly, since I had only very infrequently contributed to their magazine, the editors of *St. Nicholas* suggested my writing a juvenile serial. I appreciated the compliment of



this proposal and I accepted it with the proviso that I was to be released if I could not hit on a theme for a tale likely to hold the attention of healthy young Americans.

I examined my episodic recollections of my own school-days in the vain hope that I might be able to reveal myself as the author of an American 'Tom Brown at Rugby.' I soon saw that I could replevin nothing of value from my years at Anthon's or Churchill's or Charlier's, altho I did recapture certain boyish traits floating in my memory of that remote past which most unimaginative men leave behind them once for all when they have come to man's estate. Of course, I reread 'Tom Brown' itself; and I was disappointed to perceive its crudity of construction, its amateurishness of method, altho the salient episodes, like the fight with Slogger Williams, were still instinct with vitality. I am inclined to believe now that the immediate popularity of that classic of British boyhood may have been due mainly to this heroic combat. He was a true boy who, when his mother proposed to read to him out of the Bible, asked her to pick out "the fightingest parts."

I reread also Aldrich's 'Story of a Bad Boy,' the truly autobiographic Tom Bailey, and the 'Adventures of Tom Sawyer.' These are books that no boy's library should be without, and I resolved that whenever I might write my juvenile serial story, it should have a good fight in it, and its young hero should be called Tom, to mate with Tom Brown, Tom Bailey and Tom Sawyer. And quite by acci-

dent one day there came to me the germ of a plot, the long hunt of a New York lad for a sum of money stolen from his great-great-grandfather in the Revolutionary War. With this as the center of my story I was soon able to devise a succession of episodes and to people my plot with a group of contrasted juvenile characters, several of them being suggested to me more or less directly by young people and by grown-ups of my acquaintance.

As the incident of the Revolutionary War which was at the core of my story had to be the battle of Harlem Heights, I was forced to lay the scene of my tale in and around Riverside Drive, which had then just begun to be built up. I opened my narrative with a description of this region then in course of transition from a semi-rural neighborhood to a completely urban community; and I immediately introduced my group of boys gathered about a bonfire on Election night in a cañon formed by a street which had been cut down to the grade of the Riverside Drive, leaving cliffs of rock towering on both sides. Less than half-a-dozen years after I had visited this territory for the first time to study the scenery of my story, Columbia College moved from Forty-ninth Street to Morningside Heights, a removal which led us to sell our house in Eighteenth Street and to buy another on the corner of West End Avenue and Ninety-third Street. And to my great surprise, when I came to reconnoiter my new surroundings, I found that I was then a resident of the very street ending in a cañon in which my youthful band had made its first appearance.

'Tom Paulding, a Tale of Treasure-trove in the Streets of New York,' was published as a book in the fall of 1892, after having done its duty first in twelve numbers of *St. Nicholas*. While it was in the course of serial publication, and when only five or six parts had been printed, Thomas Wentworth Higginson wrote me that his little daughter was following the fortunes of my hero, as these were disclosed month by month. He informed me further that when she had finished the current instalment she laid down the magazine in disgust with the remark that she "did not think Mr. Brander Matthews a very good story-teller." Her father requested her reason for this severe criticism. "Why," she answered, "don't you see? He always stops the story at the most interesting place."

### III

It was possibly because I had frequently crossed the Atlantic in my boyhood for prolonged visits, and had thus become familiar with many of the capitals of Europe, that I came early to an appreciation of the individuality, the picturesqueness, and the charm of New York. I found that Bunner shared this feeling with me; and we used to wonder how it was that so few novels had then been written with this city as their background. When we first discussed the topic, in 1879 or in 1880, we could count on the fingers of one hand the works of fiction which had their scene laid in the Empire City. There was the 'Potiphar Papers' of Curtis, if that could

fairly be termed a novel, which may be doubted; and there was the 'Cecil Dreeme' of Theodore Winthrop, to be considered rather as a romance.

In fact, the novel of Boston was then more abundant than the novel of New York; and Howells was then describing the manners and customs of Bostonians, preparatory to his removal to New York, where he was to lay the scene of his 'Hazard of New Fortunes' (which did not appear until 1889). Before the publication of Howells's significant interpretation of the life of the largest city in America, we had only Henry James's 'Washington Square' and W. H. Bishop's 'House of a Merchant Prince.' When this last book came out there was a courteous debate between Bishop and Bunner on the possibilities of New York as a field for fiction. Bunner soon turned from criticism to creation, and in the 'Midge,' in which he gave a sympathetic study of the French quarter near Washington Square, and in his more ambitious 'Story of a New York House,' he proved by example that the possibilities of the field were more tempting than his adversary in the discussion had been willing to admit. I must not neglect to mention the succession of painful examinations of different aspects of New York undertaken by Edgar Fawcett in a series of stories, wherein the aspiration of the author was more evident than his inspiration.

The field was here, and it was fertile, and furthermore, it had not been pre-empted. Yet there were very few of us who then recognized the richness of the soil or who had confidence in the crop that

could be raised. London had been painted on the broad canvases of a host of robust novelists, even if the minor aspects of her life had not tempted the more delicate miniaturists of the short-story; but New York had not yet attracted either the novelists or the tellers of brief tales. Her streets were paved with gold as opulently in those days as they are now; but the men of letters who strayed here and there in her thoroughfares had not the vision to perceive that they were living in a Golconda of opportunity. Paris had been glorified by an immortal succession of men of genius and of men of talent, from Victor Hugo and Balzac to Daudet and Zola. The panorama of Parisian society had been boldly brushed in by generation after generation of keen-eyed and skilful interpreters of its myriad manifestations. Even if we in America were not yet ripe for a great novelist to celebrate our city by the sea, I failed to understand how it was that we had not developed short-story writers akin to Halévy and Coppée and Maupassant, writers inspired by a like ambition even if they could not attain to a like art.

I need not say here that it was not with any intention of measuring myself with these masters of fiction, major and minor, that I began to write short-stories saturated with local color. My motive was at once more modest and far simpler. I attempted to catch certain aspects and attributes of New York merely because I found keen enjoyment in making these snap-shots of the metropolis, and because I kept on observing conditions and situations which

seemed to me to be essentially characteristic of the city I loved. There were few in those days of the late seventies and early eighties of the last century daring enough to admit any affection for New York; and there were almost none ready to vaunt it. The inhabitants of New York were at that time perhaps a little too close to the draft-riots, to the Tweed ring, to the Black Friday of Jim Fisk and Jay Gould, to have any civic pride; and they were almost equally devoid of civic consciousness. I rejoiced that I was a citizen of no mean city, and so did Bunner, who had already rimed some of his lilting 'Ballades of the Town.' We saw no just cause for the constant disparagement of New York or for the deprecatory tone of its sparse defenders. New York was what it was; and we loved it for what it was, even if we hoped that it would be more lovable as the years rolled on.

One of the characteristic customs of New York, the Election-night bonfire — a custom carried over to America from the mother country in the old colonial days, when it celebrated the discomfiture of Guy Fawkes — I had introduced into 'Tom Paulding.' But there were many others crying aloud, so it seemed to me, to be commemorated however inadequately. There was the extraordinary spectacle presented by Fifth Avenue on the afternoon of Thanksgiving Day when the horns of many coaches proclaimed that the intercollegiate football game had been won and lost — a spectacle which was soon to cease to be visible, so rapidly do customs come and go in this swift life of ours. There was the Me-

morial Day parade; there was the private view of the National Academy of Design; there was the outpouring of families into lower Central Park on a Sunday afternoon in early spring; there was the annual Horse Show in Madison Square Garden in the late fall; and there was the roof-garden show on the top of some building in the middle of the summer. There was Mulberry Bend in the swelter of a hot wave; and there was Wall Street blankly uninhabited on a holiday. There were the bobtailed cars, and the shrieking trains of the elevated railroad with clouds of steam foaming down to become iridescent as the rays of the setting sun shot thru them. There was color everywhere, unending movement, incessant vitality.

In the years that followed the publication of 'Tom Paulding' I put forth a series of thumb-nail sketches of one or another of these significant manifestations of New York. Perhaps my little etchings, never deeply bitten into the plate, were far more insignificant than I liked to think them; yet they had the merit of sincerity and of directness. They had furthermore the merit of knowledge, for I never went out of my depth, avoiding those many aspects of metropolitan existence that I could not adequately interpret because they were beyond my ken. Sometimes I was able to utilize a real happening, brought to me by word of mouth and therefore more malleable than if it had been snatched from the newspaper; and sometimes the germ of my story had to evolve by spontaneous generation in my own head, conjuring up the ghost of a plot to per-

mit me to reproduce the atmosphere of the special spot and the special moment I had chosen.

When I had written a dozen of these urban impressions, scarcely solid enough in texture to be termed short-stories, I gathered them into a volume called 'Vignettes of Manhattan,' and published in 1894. I dedicated it to Theodore Roosevelt, whom I had not long before persuaded to write a book about his native city for the series of 'Historic Towns,' edited by E. A. Freeman. Three years later I was ready with a second dozen, again one for every month in the year; and this volume was entitled 'Outlines in Local Color.' But it was not until eighteen years after 'Vignettes of Manhattan,' long after I had finally renounced the writing of fiction, that I found another dozen of these sketches had been accumulating and so it was that I was able to send forth in 1912 a final volume of 'Vistas of New York.' Whatever may be the literary worth of this triptych of the Empire City, I cannot but hope that these pen-and-ink sketches of mine may perhaps be useful to a social historian in the twenty-first century when he is at a loss for the lighter literature which may help him to understand and to interpret the serried facts he will have disinterred from hundreds of less vivacious documents.

#### IV

In the same years in which I was making these three dozen remarques, if I may so call them, my ambition to chronicle the movement of the mighty



city led me to attempt three larger pictures of life in Manhattan. The first of these novels of New York was 'His Father's Son,' which was issued in 1895, and in which I utilized my experiences in Wall Street a score years earlier. Altho I had never been allured by the hope that I could guess at the vagaries of the market, I had spent my days in the midst of those who had deluded themselves into the belief that they could win against the odds, almost as mathematically certain as those of the gaming-table; and from the windows of my father's office in Broad Street almost next door to the Stock Exchange I had looked down on the speculators for a quick turn as dispassionately and as seriously as I had gazed at the gamblers who sat intent about the roulette-wheel and the trente-et-quarante tables at Homburg and Baden-Baden when I was a boy. I utilized in my plot several actual happenings that had come to my knowledge, striving to be as accurate as possible in my presentation of the turmoil of the street, with its intrigues and its betrayals.

When my story was complete Bunner read it in manuscript and I made plain any point which was not perfectly clear to him in his ignorance of the manners and customs of Wall Street. Another kind friend, more familiar with the intricacies of speculation, also lent me his aid, and I made straight the occasional slips which he had detected in my account of the procedure of the slaves of the ticker. The tone of my tale was quiet and its manner was as unsensational as may be; yet I believed then,

and indeed I believe now, that the picture I painted was true to life.

My second novel of New York was called 'A Confident To-morrow' and it appeared in 1899. It had for its hero a young man from the country coming up to the conquest of the city; he was a newspaper man and the action took place wholly in literary circles among the men of letters and the editors and the illustrators whom I had come to know in the intimacy of daily association. Here again I was able to utilize things seen by me and persons known by me; and here again the action was simple and straightforward, with the emphasis rather on what the characters were than on what they did. 'A Confident To-morrow' was my effort to translate into fiction the men of my own calling; it was my remote imitation of 'Pendennis,' a novel that almost every novelist is moved to imitate sooner or later in the practice of his art. Its characters were less boldly drawn than those I had set in motion in 'His Father's Son,' and its action was less significant, yet it had been constructed with the same care and with the same punctilious conscientiousness in its accessories.

The third and last of my novels of New York was the 'Action and the Word,' which appeared in the spring of 1900 and in which I essayed a picture of fashionable life, with its frivolities and its artificialities. In 'His Father's Son' the interest lay in the relation of parent and child; in 'A Confident To-morrow' it revolved around the ardent young fellow who had come to town to push his fortunes;

and in the 'Action and the Word' these heroes, old and young, yielded the stage to a heroine, whom I strove to make as charming as possible in spite of her whims and her wilfulness and her unexpected transitions of temper and of mood.

It is now approaching a score of years since the latest of these novels was composed and I can look back at them with a disinterestedness not easy of attainment when they were fresh from the workshop. They were well received by the reviewers in the newspapers and by my fellow-craftsmen in the practice of fiction. They did not sell badly, but they failed to become "best sellers." Their merits were modest, perhaps too modest to force them outside of the inner circle who relish deliberate workmanship. I am inclined to think now that they were perhaps a little too quiet in tone, too subdued, too moderate, to thrust themselves into the favor of the general public.

And it may be also that they suffered from another defect due to my contemporary practice of the art of the drama; they were perhaps a little too swift to give the average reader the time needed to take in the full meaning of what was said and of what was done. The dialog had the compact compression demanded by the rigid limitation of time in the theater when there are only two hours for the traffic of the stage, a compression unnecessary and even out of place in the more leisurely narrative of a novel. That is to say, my stories lacked the dilation and the dilution needed in pure narrative when words and deeds are not reinforced by the voice and the

gesture of actors actually before the eye, and thus driving home every point by dint of simultaneous visual and auditory sensation.

When I sat down to write one after another of these representations of life in New York as I saw it and as I interpreted it, I had no belief that I was engaged in creating that intangible and evasive entity, the Great American Novel, for I was not simple-minded enough to suppose that I had it in me to compass this feat; and I had already come to the conclusion that these United States were too many and too various for any one work of fiction ever to include enough of their many-colored spectrums to be accepted as satisfactorily representative of the whole country. It has always seemed to me as futile and as foolish to aspire after the Great American Novel as it would be to try and decide which is the Great French Novel or the Great British Novel. Nor when I undertook my three studies of life in this city did I even feel any ambition to write the Great New York Novel, for I knew the town well enough to feel assured that it is almost as various as the whole country, and that it is far too complex to permit any one novelist to concentrate the essence of it in any one novel. My humbler attempt was to fix one or another of the shifting scenes of life in this great city; in fact, I was really seeking the same goal in these three novels that I was seeking at the same time in my three volumes of the 'Vignettes,' which were also outlines in local color.

## CHAPTER XVII

### A PROFESSOR OF DRAMATIC LITERATURE

#### I

**I**T has seemed best to deal in separate chapters with my novel-writing, my play-writing, and my playgoing, even at the risk of a slight confusion in the direct chronological sequence of these records. As a matter of fact, my playgoing and play-writing and novel-writing were simultaneous; and contemporary with a large part of all three of them was another series of experiences, as a lecturer for a year and thereafter as a professor at Columbia College. In the spring of 1891 H. H. Boyesen dropped in one day to tell me that the professor of English, Thomas R. Price, was going to be absent in Europe the following winter; and he inquired if I would entertain a proposition to act as substitute while Price was away. I was completely taken by surprise as I had never contemplated the possibility of entering the teaching profession, even for a single year.

Yet the more I considered the suggestion the better I liked it. Professor Price came to talk it over with me; and not long after I had a conference with Seth Low, who had assumed the presidency of Columbia only a few months before. So it came about that when the college began its year in Oc-

tober, 1891, I found myself engaged to conduct three courses, open to seniors and to such graduate students as might present themselves. And in the following spring the trustees created a new professorship of literature, to which I was appointed. I may anticipate here to record that the title of my chair was changed in 1899, when I became professor of dramatic literature — mine being, so far as I know, the first professorship of the drama to be founded in any English-speaking university.

There is an Arab proverb to the effect that "No man is called of God till he is forty." Whatever the wisdom of this assertion — and it would be easy to cite abundant evidence in its support — it was my good fortune to enter upon a new kind of work in the very year when I had attained the age of two-score. The profession for which my father had trained me I had never been permitted to practise, and the profession for which I had trained myself I had been able to practise only intermittently. Now, when five of my years had elapsed beyond the half of the allotted threescore and ten, I found myself engaged in the practice of a third profession for which I had had no training at all; and it is in the practice of this third profession that I have spent now more than a quarter of a century.

Not only had I had no experience in teaching but I had never been called upon to consider its principles or to bestow on it even cursory attention. I knew a dozen or more of the teaching staff of Columbia whom I had met at the Authors Club and elsewhere; but my talks with them had never

chanced to turn on the principles or the practice of the art of education. All that I really knew was that teaching was truly an art and that therefore I should have to acquire it somehow — and probably at the expense of my earliest classes. Fortunately, during that first year when I was serving as a substitute for Professor Price I was allowed to choose the subjects of my three courses of lectures; and therefore, as I selected American literature, modern fiction, and English versification, three topics with which I was already fairly familiar, I had not to get up the matter of my instruction, being thereby free to devote my whole energy to the manner whereby I might best convey to the members of my classes what I had to impart.

It is evidence of my lack of acquaintance with the program of studies in American colleges when I began to teach that I selected these three topics, which were all three of them almost if not quite absent from college catalogs at that time. There were one or two professors in the English department of Dartmouth and of Cornell, for example, who were already considering the careers of the chief American poets and prose-writers; but these were not more than two or three at the most in those distant days, common as is the consideration of our American authors now in all our larger colleges. As for the course on the evolution of the modern novel, I am inclined to doubt if I had any predecessor or even for several years any competitor. And the third course, that on English versification, might have been described as “metrical composition,” since it

was designed to parallel the prescribed courses in the theory and practice of rhetoric, my intention being to tempt the students into various kinds of verse-making, not with any absurd hope of developing them into poets, but mainly because I believed metrical composition to be an excellent discipline for prose-writing. This was also a novelty; and even now it is not as frequent as it might be. Here also I may note that in my second year at Columbia, that is in the fall of 1892, I announced a fourth course on the dramatists of the nineteenth century, a topic not at that time treated in any other college. Of course, no one of these courses was deliberately given because of its novelty. They were all four announced solely because their subjects were those with which I had made myself most familiar. In my diffidence on the threshold of a new career I wanted to advance as easily as might be along the line of least resistance. In so far as I may have been a pioneer into little-explored regions, my pioneering was wholly without malice prepense.

Recalling the dull drudgery in my own undergraduate days over the lamentable manual from the dry pages of which we were supposed to derive the dead facts of English literature, I eschewed the use of any text-book, requiring my classes to read for themselves and encouraging them to form their own opinions about the books they read. Quite possibly I began by demanding of them more pages than they could very well digest; but at all events I was acting in accordance with the sound principle that, if they were exposed to the contagion of literature,



some of them might catch it. And I hoped that my own lively appreciation of the writings of most of the authors I asked them to read might awaken in at least some of them a kindred enjoyment. I had written novels and plays myself, and if I was no poet I was none the less responsible for a good deal of rime, whatever its value; and so I had no hesitation in taking them into the workshop and in talking to them about technic. And however little beneficial my instruction may have been to my students, it was highly profitable to me, for in teaching them I soon discovered that I was perpetually learning myself. I was constantly spurred to the acquisition of wider information by the necessity of meeting the eager inquiries of intelligent youth.

## II

I went back to Columbia exactly twenty years after I had been graduated with the class of '71; and the college I found on my return was very different from the college I had left. There was a new spirit in the air; the many changes which had taken place during the score of years while I had been absent were so surprising as to be almost startling. I had left Columbia when it was still a lazy little college, almost asleep, and almost devoid of any ambition to make itself worthy of the great city in which it was placed. I found it awake and active and ambitious and acutely alive to its future possibilities. The seed planted by President Barnard

had at last begun to fructify; the sound doctrine he had preached to unheeding ears year after year in his reports (which are now accepted as educational classics) had won wider recognition; and a few of the plans he had proposed were on the point of being carried out.

When I had been a student the college was sufficient unto itself; the scientific school was establishing its right to exist; the law school, semi-proprietary as it was, housed itself unworthily at a distance of two miles; and the medical school, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, wholly proprietary, had only a nominal connection with Columbia. When I began to lecture I found that the scientific school had come into its own; that the law school was sumptuously sheltered in a beautiful building in the college grounds; that a movement was already under way to incorporate the medical school more intimately with Columbia; and that there was a graduate school of political science with a gifted group of enthusiastic professors picked by the unerring discretion of its dean, John W. Burgess, in whose prophetic eye there was the vision of a Columbia proportionate to the opportunities and the responsibilities due to her position in the metropolis. There was even a graduate school already in existence for guiding advanced students in literature, in linguistics, and in philosophy; and the young dean of this school of philosophy, Nicholas Murray Butler, was a sturdy supporter of the advances advocated by Barnard.

At the center of all these activities and expansions,

and serving as the foundation of them all, was the historic college with its four-year course, already far more flexible and far richer in its offerings than it had been in my time. Perhaps it was in the college itself that the signs of new life were most abundant and most obvious; and yet the relations of the old college to the auxiliary institutions it had mothered were insecure and anomalous. The legal name of this clutter of schools was still Columbia College, yet all the essential elements of a real university were at hand; and I had not long been connected with the institution before it asserted itself and assumed the style and title of Columbia University, restoring to the earlier entity out of which it had developed by force of circumstances and in the course of time, the historic title of Columbia College. I came on the scene in time to behold the actual creation of the university and to see it "pawing the earth, its hinder parts to free."

The Columbia I had known in my youth had a faculty of less than ten, nearly all of whom I recalled as well advanced in years. The Columbia which I joined had a faculty of two or three hundred, the most of whom were still young, with the best of their work before them. In the Columbia I dimly remembered we spoke with awe of Drisler's contributions to the Greek lexicon of Liddell and Scott, revering this as the sole outward and visible sign of authorship connected with the college. In the Columbia to which I returned there was an incessant productivity; and a dozen at least of my colleagues were members of the Authors Club. It was a highly

stimulating society into which I was welcomed; and its atmosphere was electric.

The movement in advance had been in progress for several years before I arrived to take part in it; and already the activities of the rejuvenated institution were so many and so energetic that they were cramped for space in the indecorous old buildings which made a sorry appearance by the side of the stately and towering edifice which housed the library and the law school, and the more recently erected Hamilton Hall wherein Professor Price had the study I was privileged to occupy in his absence. If Columbia should be forced to remain where it was, confined to a single small city block, beside which ran the shrieking and hissing locomotives of a triple railroad, its future would be strangled. And in the winter of my return the far-seeing clerk of the Board of Trustees, John B. Pine, urged the daring move to Morningside Heights, a move soon resolved upon and finally accomplished six years later, in 1897, when Columbia took possession of its artistically planned new buildings on the spacious grounds of the Bloomingdale Asylum, as it had taken over in 1859 the old buildings of the Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb. An autobiography like this must not be permitted to become a history of Columbia University, however tempting the opportunity may appear; but it is only fit that the autobiographer should set down here his own delight in having been an eye-witness of the logical and irresistible expansion of the educational institution with which the last years of his life have been so closely

connected. His own share in this outflowing from an ancient root has been minimal; but he has always rejoiced at being allowed to behold a spectacle so nobly encouraging and so typically American as the sudden transformation of an old and weak college into a new and strong university, aspiring in spirit as well as ample in numbers.

### III

In 1891 the large college clubs which now flourish in New York had not been founded; and the alumni associations of Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Columbia held annual dinners in the fall and early winter at each of which representatives of the other three societies were invited to speak. The Columbia dinner took place in the middle of December, and I was asked to "improve the occasion" with a few remarks. As I was allowed to choose my topic I selected 'Twenty Years' Changes at Columbia,' and for once in my life I reaped the bountiful reward of the spellbinder. What I had to describe to my fellow-alumni was news to most of those present and it was interesting to all of them; and thus it happened that the bearer of glad tidings received the guerdon of applause as if he himself had brought about the happy state of affairs he was merely reporting upon.

This is a phenomenon often to be observed at public dinners; and I came to the conclusion later that a speech cannot fail to be fairly successful if only it contains what the speaker himself wants to

say to that special audience, and if this is what that audience wants to hear from him. If there is not this community of desire, the speaker may enjoy his own orating but the listeners are likely to be wearied by words having no special appeal to them; the prosperity of a speech lies in the ears of them that hear it. It would have been well for me in 1891 if I had firmly grasped this fundamental principle then and if I had been guided by it. Because my remarks had been listened to with more or less interest at the dinner of the Columbia Alumni, I was requested to go to the dinner of the Harvard Alumni, as the representative of Columbia. I went with a light heart and I came home with my vanity trailed in the dust. To the Columbia men I had something to say, a message to deliver, a report to make, something that I really wanted to utter to them and that they were glad to hear from me. At the Harvard dinner I had nothing to say altho I had to rise and say something. I had no message and no report welcome to Harvard ears; and these ears listened to me only out of politeness. My glib utterances fell into a frosty void; they echoed in my own ears like the hollow crackling of thorns under a pot; and to intensify the misfortune of the misadventure into which my thoughtlessness had led me, I spoke sandwiched between Phillips Brooks and the modest captain of the triumphant football-team.

I had already agreed to go later also to the Yale dinner, but I had taken the warning to heart; and for years now I have refused to stand and deliver, unless I at least believe that I have something to

say that the special gathering I am asked to address will be willing to hear. Now and again I have foolishly yielded to friendly pressure and to the insidious plea: "You can say something — you can say anything you want to say." And when I have accepted these invitations and found too late that there was nothing I really wanted to say, I have observed that however courteously the listeners may have endeavored to disguise their lack of interest in what I managed to utter, their endeavors were no more successful than my speech.

It may be noted, however, that these comments on the conditions of profitable offhand speaking, and on proffering a few remarks after dinner, must not be supposed to apply to more formal and stately occasions, a commemorative oration or an address before the Phi Beta Kappa. To such more dignified meetings the audience comes in an altogether different frame of mind and with an altogether different expectation; and the speaker is then encouraged to do his best, to be grave and serious, to voice afresh the perennial platitudes and to clothe anew the everlasting commonplaces, if only he himself firmly believes that he is reflecting new light on the eternal verities.

In the course of my quarter century in the service of Columbia I have been drafted once to give a Phi Beta Kappa address and again once to give a somewhat similar address at the opening of the institution in the fall. For executive and for administrative positions I developed no aptitude; and for committee work I had no liking. As a mere matter

of record I may set down here that I have been a trustee of the Columbia University Press since its foundation in 1893, that I served as editor of the *Columbia University Quarterly* for a year, and that I was the chairman of a committee to bring out a history of the university published when Columbia celebrated the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the founding of King's College. When Bunner died in 1896, others of his friends joined with me in raising a memorial fund sufficient to provide a gold medal to be awarded annually to the candidate for a Columbia degree who should submit the best essay on an assigned topic in the history of American literature; and I am inclined to believe that the H. C. Bunner Medal was the earliest reward offered in any of our colleges for research in the American branch of English literature.

In 1899, when my title was changed to professor of dramatic literature, a department of English was created with Price as its chairman and with the late George Rice Carpenter as its secretary. As the university has grown with the expansion of its three colleges, Columbia, Barnard, and Teachers, with the development of graduate work in the school of philosophy, and with the establishment of the School of Journalism, new professors have been added to the department of English until there are now more than a score of us — twice as many in this single department as there were in the whole college when I was an undergraduate. After the death of Price, the first chairman, the office was abolished and the department has had no official head, exhibit-



ing itself as an example of pure democracy, doing all its business in town-meeting. Acting as a unit, we have suggested all appointments and all promotions, and the president and the trustees have favored this autonomy in so far as the resources of the budget would permit. It is evidence of the cordiality of our relations with one another and of our harmonious opinions, that no action has been taken since the foundation of the department of English, except on the unanimous vote of all present. Nor does this external concord conceal any factional jealousy; as a matter of fact, the several members of the department are on the best of terms with one another and are constantly seeking out occasions of service to one another, as I can testify on repeated personal experience of this good-will.

#### IV

Altho I did not for several years after I was called to Columbia relinquish the writing of stories, long and short, or the writing of plays, the natural result of my professional duties was to detach me more or less from creative work and to center my attention more and more on criticism. The necessity of narrating the lives of authors and of relating their successive publications to their biographies drew me irresistibly toward literary history — which is not a brother to criticism but only a first cousin. I was led to consider the evolution of the American branch of English literature, and to see in it the most

salient and the most significant record of the changing temper and the modifying moods of the American people.

After I had given my elementary course on American literature for three or four years I contributed to *St. Nicholas* a series of papers on the chief American authors, focussing the attention of the young reader on the men themselves with the firm hope that he might thereby be lured into the reading of their works for his own enjoyment. To these papers, published in a juvenile magazine, I added a few others, and thus I was enabled to send forth in 1896 an 'Introduction to the Study of American Literature.' I hoped to have this adopted as a textbook in high schools but I desired to avoid the aridity of the manual of English literature that I still recalled with detestation from my undergraduate days, and I therefore sought to give a human interest to the schoolbook by adorning it with portraits of the authors, views of their well-known dwellings, and reproductions of their autographs and manuscripts. My indurated modesty forces me to ascribe to these devices, which were then novel, the continued popularity of the little book. It has attained to a circulation which many a best seller might envy, since its sale was a quarter of a million copies within twenty-five years after it appeared.

This primer, for such the 'Introduction to the Study of American Literature' was intended to be, was the first book which was the immediate consequence of my teaching; but it was not to be the last. It had grown out of my conduct of courses

for undergraduates; and my time was divided equally between them and the graduate students who flocked to Columbia in steadily increasing numbers. I was asked to give a graduate course on the development of the drama from Æschylus to the Middle Ages to parallel a course by another professor on the evolution of criticism from Aristotle to the Italian Renaissance; and this compelled me gladly to return to the Greek texts over which I had toiled in the persistent search for the second aorist. To my delighted surprise, I discovered on this more mature investigation that the authors of 'Agamemnon' and 'Œdipus' and 'Medea' were playwrights as well as poets, and that the author of the 'Frogs' was a precursor of Weber and Fields in addition to being the lyricist best beloved of all the Greeks by Arthur Pendennis.

I had totally forgotten my very early ambition to write a history of dramatic literature long before I set to work to prepare ten lectures covering the whole 'Development of the Drama.' Seven of these lectures I delivered before the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences in the winter of 1902; and in the spring of that year I went over to London to repeat three of them at the Royal Institution in Albemarle Street. The whole series appeared as a book in 1903; and ten years later I was greatly gratified to receive a Japanese translation, made by a native of Nippon who had been a graduate student in one of my classes.

The opening lecture in this volume was devoted to a discussion of the principles of dramaturgic crafts-

manship, all of which, so I had decided to my own satisfaction, could be deduced from the fact that every dramatic poet has devised his plays with the desire and intent that they should be performed in a theater, by actors, and before an audience — the playhouse of his own time, the players of his own country, and the playgoers of his own race being the three factors which necessarily condition his work. A few years after this chapter had appeared in the 'Development of the Drama,' I was invited to prepare a volume in which my body of doctrine on dramaturgy should be declared in more detail; and in response to this invitation I published in 1910 a 'Study of the Drama' in which I set in serried array the principles I had been expounding at Columbia ever since I had become its professor of dramatic literature.

In 1911 I followed this 'Study of the Drama' with a 'Study of Versification,' which contained the body of doctrine on practical metrics which I had developed during the years when I was giving the course on English versification to successive classes of undergraduates. My course on the modern drama I could not decant in a volume by itself, as the course had been given for the first time at least ten years after I had published my consideration of the leading 'French Dramatists of the Nineteenth Century.' But I had never let out of my mind the ambition to deal in my own fashion with the career and with the achievements of the master of French comedy; and after I had profited by discussing his successive plays with successive classes of keen-

mind and well-equipped graduate students — a discussion which I recognize as an invaluable gymnastic — I set to work at last to tell again the story of Molière's harassed life and to study anew the specific merits of his several plays. When the biography was completed, I extracted from it or condensed from it six lectures which I delivered in Boston before the Lowell Institute in the fall of 1908; and two years later I published 'Molière; His Life and His Works,' a biography which had this novelty at least, that it dealt with the dramatist primarily as a playwright and only secondarily as a man of letters. Then I began work at once on a corresponding consideration of 'Shakspeare as a Playwright,' which was published in the fall of 1913, and in which I expressly refused to dwell upon his poetry, his philosophy, and his psychology, preferring rather to deal with him as a playmaker pure and simple, an aspect of his genius often neglected by those of his ardent admirers who have little knowledge of stagecraft.

Nor are these the only books due in large part to my professorship at Columbia. A volume entitled 'Parts of Speech: Essays on English,' issued in 1901, may be considered as a continuation of the linguistic investigations begun in the 'Americanisms and Bricolages' of nine years earlier. Other collections of essays, however, which appeared at irregular intervals after I was called to Columbia — 'Aspects of Fiction' (1896), the 'Historical Novel' (1901), 'Inquiries and Opinions' (1907), and 'Gateways to Literature' (1912) — reveal in their pages

the influence of my attempt to make the history of literature alive by an incessant consideration of its ever-advancing technic.

## V

“From forty to fifty a man must move upward or the natural falling off in the vigor of life will carry him downward.” This remark of Holmes’s seems to be shrewder and more solidly rooted in fact than the severer assertion of Dr. Osler, that a man has necessarily done his best work before he reaches twoscore. I count it great good fortune that when I was forty I found myself practising a new profession, which forced me into unexpected activities, thus counteracting the natural falling off in the vigor of life.

It must be noted that Holmes also declared the professor’s chair to be “an insulating stool, so to speak; his age, his knowledge, real or supposed, his official station, are like the glass legs which support the electrician’s piece of furniture and cut it off from the common currents of the floor upon which it stands.” This may be true enough in a medical or technical school or even in a small rural college; but it is less true in a huge urban university, with its stimulating mass of graduate students with whom a professor is brought into an intimate contact rarely possible when he is imparting instruction solely to undergraduates of immature years. There is no keener intellectual exercise, none which calls for all the mental celerity that a man may possess,

than the conducting of a class of well-equipped graduate students, often men who have been out of college for several years, engaged themselves in teaching. To hold their interest, to win their respect, to force them to do their own thinking, the professor has to put forth all his energy. He cannot afford to let these alert investigators, eager and ardent to acquire, catch him unawares. He cannot override them by his age, his official station, his knowledge, real or supposed. He cannot but be aware that they are forever "sizing him up," as the phrase is; and he must do his best to "make good," as they put it in their direct vernacular.

He has to guide their inquiries into the subject-matter of the course and to train them to push their investigations further after they have left him. And, above all, is it his bounden duty to force them to form their own judgments upon the works they are called upon to analyze. The highest compliment I ever received from a graduate student, and therefore the most grateful to my ears, was the remark that I had made it clear to him that it was not only his right to have his own opinion about the successive masterpieces we had been discussing in class, but also his duty to come to a conclusion of his own. What the professor needs to bear in mind always is that it is for him to give his students a grasp on the principles of criticism so firm that they can be trusted to form sound conclusions of their own.

Not only have I profited incessantly by close contact with alert graduate students, gathered in a little

group about my table and doing their share, each of them, in the discussions we were constantly starting, but I have also found keen stimulus in my association with my fellow-professors. In the quarter of a century in which I have been connected with Columbia, the university has kept on expanding and branching out into new fields. The student body has gone on increasing year after year; and this has compelled a corresponding increase in the teaching staff. The professors giving instruction in Columbia College when I was graduated in 1871 were less than ten in number; and when I returned in 1891 to join them, I discovered that I was to have two or three hundred colleagues. After twenty-six years of teaching I find that the number of officers of instruction has swollen to about eight hundred. Even when I joined them, most of these new colleagues were younger than I; and as I have grown older with the passing of the years, I have had the privilege of association with a steadily increasing group of men, interested in the things I have at heart, earnest and ambitious, and representing a generation later than mine and intermediary between my own maturity and the immaturity of the undergraduates of the college. This contact with those who still had the best years of their lives before them, has been steadily stimulating for a senior in the craft, and wholesome in that it tended to prevent an elder from premature stiffening and hardening of the mental muscles.

In my persistent playgoing it has amazed me to note that there seems to have been evolved in our



theater a definite type of stage-professor, as summary and as regardless of the fact as the stage-Irishman or the stage-Frenchman. This traditional figure represents a foolish and unworldly person, quite unable to take care of himself, and brought forward as a butt for unsympathetic laughter. Whenever I have joined in the mirth, I did it with my withers unwrung and wondering where the hasty playwright had ever seen any one remotely resembling the character he had projected on the boards. Possibly a few of the more obvious traits of the stage-professor may have been borrowed from some occupant of a chair in a very rural college; but I doubt it. The stage-professor seems to me to be of imagination all compact. Certainly I have never discovered among my Columbia colleagues any one who had any of the characteristics which combine to make the theatrical type a figure of fun.

Indeed, I incline to the belief that we have developed at Columbia a professor of a kind not likely to exist except in a university which happens to be incorporated in a great city. In little and remote country colleges the teaching staff may possibly share a little in the rusticity of their neighbors; and in like manner the professors in a large city university are likely to acquire a sort of urbanity by contagion from those who surround them and with whom they are likely to have many points of contact. At Columbia the professor is not uncommon who is both urban and urbane, who is not only a gentleman and a scholar, in the good old phrase, but also more or less a man of the world and even

on occasion a man of affairs. There is one whose skill in finance is so well known that he was proffered the presidency of a trust company at a salary several times that which he was receiving, in spite of which he declined the tempting proposal.

There is another who made a most important invention by which he is in receipt of a superb income. There are at least half-a-dozen more who have inherited comfortable fortunes and who have none the less preferred the professor's chair to a seat on the box of a four-in-hand. And in my own department, that of English and Comparative Literature, there are four or five who serve as literary advisers to as many different publishing houses, thus evidencing their possession of a fair share of practicality.

So far as I have been able to form an opinion, there is no university in the United States where the position of the professor is pleasanter than it is at Columbia. The students, graduate and undergraduate, are satisfactory in quality; and their spirit is excellent. The teaching staff is so large that it is generally possible for each of us to cover that part of his field in which he is most keenly interested. Our relations with each other and with the several deans and the president and the trustees are ever friendly. So long as we do our work faithfully we are left alone to do it in our own fashion. And we have all of us the *Lernfreiheit* and the *Lehrfreiheit*, the liberty of the soul and of the mind, which was once the boast of the German universities, but which has been lost of late under the rigidity of Prussian autocracy.

It seems to me that a man is happily situated in life if he finds himself set to do the work that he likes best, if he can do this work to the satisfaction of his associates, and if he is in receipt of a living wage, sufficient for the needs of his family. It is a notorious fact that the teacher is lamentably underpaid, in our schools, in our colleges, and in our universities; but it is a fact also that this condition is now recognized and that it is therefore likely to be remedied sooner or later.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### LATER EUROPEAN MEMORIES

#### I

AS it has seemed convenient to compress into a single chapter a summary account of my connection with Columbia University, so it is also advisable for me now to group together my scattered recollections of successive summer trips to Europe. In 1883, Lowell was still our official representative in London, doing his utmost always to better the public and the private relations of the United States with the British Empire, and never willing to allow anything to be said in his presence that might seem to reflect on his own country. He was accused more than once of being a little too friendly with the British; yet some of his many British friends thought that he was unduly sensitive, not to call it touchy, in his alertness to detect any covert comparison which might strike him as disparaging to America. Colonel Eustace Balfour, of the London Scottish (who was a son-in-law of the Duke of Argyle), once confided to me that when Lowell was a guest at Inverary, the house-party found it expedient to avoid discussion of American topics for fear of arousing the jealous susceptibility of the American minister.

There was no doubt of the cordiality of Lowell's reception by all classes of society in the British Isles. The author of 'Jonathan to John' was made to feel at home; and he bore himself with equal cordiality and dignity. Indeed, dignity was his unfailing characteristic; and I recall the shock it was to Laurence Hutton, going one day with Henry James to pay a visit to Lowell, and finding there Christopher Pearse Cranch, who had dropped in to see his old friend and who called him "Jim." It was during this interview that Hutton told Lowell of a recent visit to Cambridge, where he had called on Mrs. Ole Bull, the tenant of Elmwood while its owner was away; and Lowell asked wistfully: "Do the trees miss me?"

I met Lowell first at an afternoon reception at Lang's in June, 1883; and I made bold to ask him how he was getting on with the biography of Hawthorne which he had undertaken for the American Men of Letters series. He told me that he had not yet had time to settle down to it, altho he was glad that he had undertaken it. He added that he had one special qualification for the task in that he was a New Englander, since Hawthorne could be fully comprehended only by a man of his own section. I mentioned Henry James's volume on Hawthorne in the English Men of Letters series, and Lowell smilingly declared that to be a very interesting book — "but Henry James, in so far as he is an American at all, is only a New Yorker; he is certainly not a New Englander."

Lowell was a handsome man, a fact of which he

could not be unaware; and at this first meeting I was struck by a certain fleeting resemblance to E. L. Godkin. In my juvenile indiscretion I ventured tactlessly to suggest this to him. "Ah," said Lowell, smiling humorously, "but that is the sort of thing you must never say. It won't do to tell any man that he resembles any other man; he may not care for the other man's looks!"

Those were the years when Walter Besant was engaged in establishing the Incorporated Society of Authors, of which Tennyson had accepted the presidency; and they were also the years when the American Copyright League, composed of our own writers with Lowell as its president, was working incessantly for a law to secure more adequate protection in the United States for foreign men of letters and for American men of letters in foreign countries. Late in July, 1888, the Incorporated Society of Authors gave a dinner to Lowell and to the other American authors who happened to be in London that summer, in recognition of our efforts in behalf of international copyright. James Bryce, who was about to publish his epoch-making book on the 'American Commonwealth,' was the chairman. Lowell made one of his most felicitous speeches, altho he began by confessing that he no longer went to a dinner with a light heart, thinking over his opening remarks in the cab and relying on the spur of the moment for the rest of his address. He discussed the vexed question of international copyright as one of the many difficulties which had arisen between Great Britain and the United States. He admitted that there

might be difficulties which were serious, altho there were not likely to be any "which good sense and good feeling cannot settle." Then, with an irresistible smile, he went on: "I think I have been told often enough to remember that my countrymen are apt to think that they are in the right, that they are always in the right, and that they are likely to look only at their own side of any question. Now, this attitude conduces certainly to peace of mind and imperturbability of judgment, whatever other merits it may have. I am sure I do not know where *we* got it. Do *you*?" And an immediate roar of laughter proved that his point had gone home.

Besant had asked me as one of the American guests to rise after Lowell sat down and to propose the health of our British hosts; and I managed to say what had to be said as concisely as possible. But when I got on my feet I recognized as never before the validity of the assertion that the eyes of men

After a well-graced actor leaves the stage,  
Are idly bent on him that enters next,  
Thinking his prattle tedious.

It happened, when the dinner-party broke up and we were regaining possession of our hats, that I found myself next to Lowell and I could not resist telling him how delightful I had found his speech. "But I am getting old," he answered; "my memory is no longer what it used to be. To-night I left out half my good things." And this confession confirmed me in my conviction that even a speaker as

richly endowed as Lowell and as apparently spontaneous could not forego the labor of proper preparation.

## II

Altho we ran over to the Continent for brief visits to Paris, we generally spent the most of our European summers in London; and I was in the habit of lunching at the Savile several times a week. On Saturdays I was likely to find Walter Besant, always a most agreeable companion, kindly, genial, and possessed of both humor and good humor. He was then living at Hampstead, and the rear of his garden jutted out into Hampstead Heath. Once when he was tending his flowers he overheard a fragment of the conversation of two cockneys, passing along the other side of his wall. "Wot did you do then?" asked one voice, and promptly another voice answered: "Wot did I do? I told 'im I'd punch 'is bloody 'ead if 'e didn't stop 'is inter-bloody-fering!" On repeating this to one of my Grecian colleagues at Columbia I was told that this daring device for achieving rhetorical emphasis was sometimes employed by the Greeks and that the grammarians had even invented a name for it — *tmesis*.

At luncheon one day late in the eighties I happened to tell Besant how I had noticed in my successive visits to the Savile that I found a gap in the circle of my friends there every time I came back. The first year it was Professor E. H. Palmer whom I missed, and the second year it was Professor Fleeming Jen-



kin; the third it was A. J. Duffield, the translator of Cervantes, and the fourth it was Cotter Morison, the biographer of Gibbon. When I arrived at the Savile several years after this I heard that Besant had been dangerously ill; and when he turned up at luncheon a Saturday or two later he told me that he had awakened suddenly one night when his condition was most threatening with the thought: "Am I the next man that Brander Matthews is going to miss when he comes over?"

I recall an earlier afternoon when Besant and Cotter Morison and I chatted cheerfully over our coffee in the smoking-room of the club. When Morison left us at last, Besant asked me if I had noticed any difference in the manner of the friend who had just gone. I replied that I had not; and then he told me that Morison had been making ready for years to write a history of France; he was about to begin on it when he was unexpectedly conscious of strange symptoms, so he had gone that morning to an eminent physician, who had examined him very carefully — only to tell him finally that he had a fatal disease and that his days were numbered. Morison had come straight to the Savile and he had found occasion to inform Besant that he would never be able to accomplish what had been the object of his life. Then he had changed the subject as I joined them and he had talked to us both as tho he were not under sentence of death. Not long after I had returned to America in the fall, I saw in the papers that the doctor's prediction had come true.

Among the other men whom I met at the Savile was Arnold-Forster, a nephew of the blind statesman, Forster, who had stood our friend during the civil war. Arnold-Forster was a specialist in military affairs, who kept himself abreast of the latest discoveries in science and was always glad to supply information about them. It is the custom of the Savile that any one attending the ordinary served every evening at two long tables in the dining-room shall feel at liberty to converse freely with his neighbors without waiting for any formal introduction. One evening a friend of mine noticed that Arnold-Forster was holding forth to the man sitting next to him; and when they all went upstairs for their coffee, my friend said to him that he had observed the animation of his conversation. "Yes," the insistent disseminator of information explained, "that was a very intelligent man next to me; and he seemed to be very much interested."

"What were you talking about?" was the query.

"Oh, I was just explaining some of the latest discoveries in astrophysics."

My friend smiled and said: "I should think that he might be interested in that. Don't you know who he is? — Sir Robert Ball, the astronomer royal for Ireland."

For a moment the imperturbability of Arnold-Forster was shattered. Then he laughed in his turn and said: "Isn't that just like me?"

Another of my Savile friends was Charles Villiers Stanford, the composer; and we collaborated on a ballet for which I devised a libretto and for which

he was to write the music. The project was captivating; yet now after an interval of more than a score of years I fear that it is likely to remain a project only. I prepared the book and Stanford made ready the themes he intended to employ in the score; but the playwright and the musician are dependent on the ballet-master, who has to elaborate the pantomimic suggestions of the librettist and to indicate to the composer how many bars must be allotted to every successive episode. Neither at the Alhambra nor at the Empire, the homes of ballet in London, was Stanford able to persuade the chorographic authorities to agree to produce our joint work. I confess that this has been a disappointment, since I thought there would be a certain piquancy in the announcement of a ballet at either the Empire or the Alhambra (the least scholastic of establishments in their atmosphere), having its book written by the professor of literature at Columbia University and its score composed by the professor of music at Cambridge University.

One of my talks with Stanford had a more fortunate outcome for him. He told me that he had once planned a comic opera for which his fellow-Irishman, W. G. Wills (the author of the 'Charles the First' wherein Irving was so dignified and so pathetic), was to prepare the book, basing it on Sheridan Lefanu's dramatic ballad, 'Shamus O'Brien.' They had abandoned their scheme when Gilbert and Sullivan brought out 'Trial by Jury,' because they did not dare to follow that with a musical play in which a court scene would have to be taken very

seriously. I suggested that this difficulty could have been removed by making the trial in 'Shamus O'Brien' a drumhead court-martial.

"We didn't happen to think of that," Stanford said. "And now it is too late. Wills is dead."

Then I told him that I knew another Irish playwright, far more apt for a work of this kind than Wills, since he had a gift for writing sparkling lyrics; and as I was about to return at once to New York, I gave Stanford a letter of introduction to George H. Jessop and I wrote to Jessop to prepare him for a line from Stanford. Before I got out of sight of land the composer and the playwright had found one another and had started to work on the comic opera. At their second meeting Stanford told Jessop that it was very odd it had needed an American to make them acquainted — since his mother had been Jessop's mother's bridesmaid! It is gratifying to me to be able to record that when the result of this collaboration of the two Irishmen I had been instrumental in bringing together was produced at the Opéra-Comique in London, in 1896, it met with instant success.

### III

It is the privilege of a professor at Columbia to have a sabbatical vacation every seventh year; he can take a whole year off on half-pay or he can have a half-year on full pay. In February, 1900, I took advantage of this permission to pay a visit to Egypt and to Greece. What most impressed me on my

trip up the Nile was the discovery that the dwellers in its valley are very much the same to-day that they were thousands of years ago. The faces and the figures of the men who passed us in their little skiffs and whom we saw at work on the banks were identical with the faces and the figures of the peasants depicted in the wall-paintings in the tombs of the Kings, preserved unimpaired in color thru twoscore centuries. And in all those endless years the native Egyptians had never ruled themselves. When I saw them they were governed by the British, who had succeeded the Turks and who had had as usurping predecessors the French, the Arabs, the Romans, the Greeks, and the Persians. I was familiar with Brunetière's assertion that the essence of the drama is a struggle, that it must display the clash of contending desires, and that it flourishes most abundantly in the strong-willed peoples — more especially at the epochs when the national volition has been stiffened. So I felt that if this theory was sound, then a weak-willed race like the Egyptians were unlikely ever to have developed a drama of their own. My careful search in the museums confirmed me in this belief, for amid all the relics of the past which supply endless information about the Egyptians of old, I could find nothing which seemed to imply the existence of a drama in Egypt even in its most primitive form.

From Egypt we went to Constantinople and then to Athens, where I had the pleasure of placing myself in the seat reserved for his priest in the Theater of Dionysus. From Athens we took the railroad

to Patras; we skirted the bay of Salamis, we crossed high above the Corinth canal, and then we ran along all day by the edge of the gulf of Corinth. We were in a comfortable corridor-train; and in our compartment there was a gentleman of a somewhat swarthy complexion, whom I took to be a Parsee. It turned out that I was right in my guess, and in the course of the day we fell into talk. He was from Bombay. He spoke excellent English, and he was evidently a man of education. He told us that he had been down the day before to have a good look at the bay of Salamis. "I wanted to see the place where my ancestors were defeated by the Greeks," he explained. "Herodotus says that there were three millions of us — but then Herodotus was such a liar."

From Patras we crossed to Brindisi, and over to Naples and on to Rome and to Florence. We went out one afternoon to Fiesole, where I wanted to see the well-preserved ruin of a Roman theater, to which we were conducted by a little ragamuffin. This juvenile guide was polite enough to pretend to understand my scant Italian; and he had apparently been able even to acquire a rudimentary ability to understand English. I chanced to explain to my companions that I had not seen this theater in any of my earlier visits to Florence and that it had perhaps been newly excavated. The Italian imp, who was only a yard or so in front of me, turned suddenly as he caught the word *new*; and with a horrified expression he cried out: "Non nuovo, signor; antico, *molto* antico!"

From Florence we went to Venice and thence to Budapest and Vienna, arriving in Paris in the fresh fairness of the spring, a little after the exposition had opened its doors. I had seen the earlier expositions in 1867 and 1878, altho I had unfortunately been unable to behold that of 1889. The exhibition of 1900 was the largest of all, as it was to be the last, the next period of eleven years having been allowed to pass without another strenuous effort to lure the peoples of the world to admire again the unparalleled beauty of Paris and the surpassing skill of the French in every department of the show business. The architecture of the monumental entrances of the exhibition of 1900 and of the several temporary edifices was rather flamboyant, as befitted a glorified and gigantic fair; and I could not help contrasting their elaborate artificiality with the chaste severity of classic design which had characterized our own exhibition of 1893. There was truth as well as humor in the remark that Paris had revelled in the structural novelty which might have been expected in Chicago, whereas Chicago had revealed the respect for the noble traditions bequeathed to us by the past that might have been expected in Paris.

It has been my fortune to be in the French capital at many moments of excitement, to witness the visit of Queen Victoria after the Crimean war, to hear Thiers assault the empire in 1867, to be present on the July day in 1870 when war was declared on Prussia and when the streets were thronged with vociferous mobs shouting “à Berlin! à Berlin!”;

to be present again six weeks later when the news of the defeat at Sedan brought about the downfall of the empire and the proclamation of the republic; to behold the interminable funeral processions of Victor Hugo, in 1884, and of Carnot, in 1894. In 1900 the excitement was once more intense over the Dreyfus case; and the ministry of Waldeck-Rousseau, which was displaying the courage to right the grievous wrong done to an innocent man, was in imminent danger of falling and perhaps of bringing down in its ruins the republic itself. On this occasion, as on so many others, courage proved to be the best policy; and the ministry was able to ride out the storm. It is from that moment that the political regeneration of France may be dated.

Coquelin was an intimate friend of Waldeck-Rousseau, as he had been an intimate friend of Gambetta; and he, like all the friends of Gambetta, was earnest in his insistence upon justice at whatever cost. He had the certain conviction that all would go well, and he felt free to plan an American trip for the following season, when he was to join forces with Sarah-Bernhardt.

"She is to play Roxane for me in 'Cyrano de Bergerac' and I am to play Flambeau for her in 'L'Aiglon' — the part that was originally written for me, altho it was created here by Guitry. Then I have old Duval in the 'Dame aux Camélias,' as usual — a very small part, but I don't mind that, as it is a good part, what there is of it."

I told him I had heard that she intended to appear as Hamlet; and I asked what character in



Shakspeare's tragedy he proposed to impersonate. When he answered that he would have to content himself with Polonius, I protested at once, telling him that the part was quite unworthy of him, and that it was a feebler character even than it seemed, being indeed what the French call a false good part — a *faux bon rôle*. He confessed that he knew this, but that Polonius seemed to be the only character for him, since he had to appear in every play.

"Why don't you undertake the Grave-digger?" I inquired. "Jefferson has just done it again at an all-star benefit performance in New York."

"The Grave-digger?" he returned. "That's an idea! And if Jefferson has been willing to do it, I don't see why I shouldn't. I'll look at it."

When I saw him the next day, I found him quite enthusiastic.

"You were right," he said. "The Grave-digger is an admirable character — rich and true. Of course, I shall play him — and I think I can make something out of him. Can you get me the music of his song?"

I sent to London for the tune which is traditional on the English-speaking stage, but Coquelin immediately disapproved of it, finding it lacking in character.

"I want an air which will go with the swing of a pickax," he explained. "I must have a tune to be punctuated with the blows of the Grave-digger's implement, working as he sings."

He said that he would get one of his musical friends to set Shakspeare's song for him; and it was characteristic of his artistic thoroness that not until

a third tune had been composed for him was he satisfied with its rhythm.

I may note here, since I find I have failed to remark it earlier, that Coquelin's keen artistic susceptibility was illustrated by his possession of three distinct methods of delivery, adjusted to the three modes of self-expression in which he was incomparable — acting a character, reciting a monolog, and reading a lecture. When he acted a character he was completely and wholly the comedian, employing accent and look and gesture. When he recited a monolog — and it was very largely due to his practice and to his precept that the monolog, in prose and in verse, became abidingly popular in Paris — he ceased to be an actor; he abjured gesticulation, he spoke quietly as became a gentleman in evening dress, and he relied mainly on the manifold modulations of his voice. When he had a lecture to deliver he was simpler still; he sat in his chair; he put on his horn spectacles; and he did not raise his voice or attempt any dramatic variety of intonation. An auditor of one of his lectures would never have had occasion to suspect that the reader was also the most versatile and the most accomplished of comedians.

#### IV

I crossed again to Europe in the early spring of 1902, having been invited to deliver three lectures on the English drama at the Royal Institution in Albemarle Street. I spoke in the little amphi-

theater in which Faraday and Tyndall had made some of their most memorable addresses. I stood behind the long desk, so to call it, which separated the platform from the rising tiers of seats for the listeners, and which was fitted with the proper appliances for the performance of illustrative experiments in chemistry and physics.

After my last lecture, one of my friends at the Savile expressed his regret that he had not been able to hear me, as his own engagements were likely to hold him fast on Saturday afternoons. "In fact," he went on, "the last time I was able to go to the Royal Institution was a good many years ago — and I recall the occasion because I saw Tyndall do a very curious thing. The long desk was cluttered with apparatus and in front of it, in the little space close to the first row of seats, there was a table with a stand supporting a retort filled with a dark liquid, under which a Bunsen burner was lighted just before Tyndall came out to begin his vivacious talk. I wondered what this retort was doing out there, so close to the auditors; and my wonder grew as Tyndall went on and on without utilizing it or mentioning it. Suddenly, when the hour had half elapsed, Tyndall looked up with a start of surprise, as tho he had just remembered that retort, whereupon he vaulted lightly over the desk and turned off the Bunsen burner. Then he gave a sigh of relief and walked slowly around again to his place on the platform, paying no attention to the applause of the spectators of his athletic feat. As it happened, Tyndall's assistant was an

old acquaintance of mine. So I sought him out after the lecture and asked him if the lecturer had really saved our lives by his startling leap over the desk to prevent the explosion of the retort. He laughed as he told me that there had been no danger, since the extra apparatus on that table had been arranged on purpose — and Tyndall had been practising that vault for at least a week!”

During this visit to London I ceased to go as often to the Savile as I had been in the habit of doing. The reason for this neglect of the Savile was that I had been elected to the Athenæum in the spring of 1901. It was at Locker-Lampson's request that Matthew Arnold had proposed me as a member in 1883; and the waiting-list was then so full that I had to bide my turn for eighteen years before my name could be considered. My kindly proposer had died in the interval, and Austin Dobson served as my sponsor. There were already several American members of the Athenæum, Henry James, for one, but they were all settled in London; and I am inclined to believe that I was the first non-resident American to be elected.

It was just before I gave my last lecture at the Royal Institution that the Boer war came to an end. When the news arrived that peace had at last been achieved, the streets of London were filled with joyous and noisy throngs, almost as excited as those which I had seen in Paris on the day of the proclamation of the republic. It was to celebrate the happy end of this protracted war in a distant continent that King Edward decided to establish

the Order of Merit, to which at first only twelve were appointed — three generals, Roberts, Wolsley, Kitchener; two admirals, Keppel and Seymour; four scientists, Rayleigh, Kelvin, Lister, and Huggins; two men of letters, Morley and Lecky; and one painter, Watts.

As it happened, most of the appointees to the new Order belonged also to the Athenæum; and in recognition of the signal honor conferred upon these members, the club departed from its traditions and for the first time in its fourscore years of existence it resolved to give a dinner to the Order of Merit. Then it was that I found myself fortunate in having been elected to the Athenæum the preceding year; and I was fortunate again in being favored by chance when there were so many applicants for places at the tables that names had to be selected by lot. The dinner was given on July 25, and it was attended by ten out of the twelve distinguished men to whom it was given. Lord Avebury (better known to most of us as Sir John Lubbock) presided; and speeches were made by Roberts and Kitchener, Rayleigh, Kelvin, Lister, and Huggins, each responding to the toast in his honor, and Admiral Seymour spoke for himself and also for Admiral Keppel. Arthur Balfour proposed the health of the chairman; and the chairman then proposed the health of Balfour, whose birthday it happened to be. The speaking was perhaps a little ponderous at times, and I recall that I liked least of all Lister's somewhat self-conscious remarks, and that I relished most the straightforward directness of the brief and

soldierly responses of Roberts and Kitchener. As I look over the seating plan which I have preserved I see that E. A. Abbey and I were the only Americans present; and I am reminded by the sight of Kipling's name that he broke off a chat with me just before dinner, saying: "I *must* go and find somebody to introduce me to Kitchener!" It seemed to me odd that the laureate of the British Empire should not earlier have met the general who had done so much to make secure the borders of that wide-flung realm.

I had met Kipling first at the Savile in the summer of 1891 when he had recently returned from India, and when he was in the first flush of his sudden success. At that time it seemed to me that he did not feel quite at home in England; and like most of the men who have spent their impressionable years in outlying parts of the empire, he found it easier to be friendly with an American than with the average inhabitant of the British Isles. I have often observed the fact; — I suppose that this immediate fraternizing is due to our possession of the same language and of the same traditions, and of our common difficulty in narrowing our vision to the affairs of the little island set in the silver sea. To the American as to the colonial, London may be "the power-house of the race" — but it is not the whole works. I recall that in 1891 when we were once talking about the insularity of the British, Kipling said: "Well, I'm not an Englishman, you know; I'm a colonial!" a statement that he would possibly not have repeated a score of years later.

Of all the Englishmen I have ever known Kipling has the most sympathetic understanding of American character. He married an American; he lived for a while in the United States; and his intimate acquaintance with American literature began when he was a boy-journalist in India. His friendship is so thoro that he has not hesitated more than once to point out certain of our less desirable characteristics; and this has sometimes exposed him to the charge of unfriendliness. I doubt if we Americans are fonder of flattery or more resentful of candid criticism than the British are or the French or the Germans; and our cuticle is not as tender as it was before the civil war; but even now we are not as thick-skinned as we might be.

Lovers of poetry are united in holding that its appeal is rather to the ear than to the eye. Even if we must get our knowledge from the printed page, we do not really possess a poem until we have read it aloud and made ourselves conscious of its rhythmical potency. As this is the case, I have been inclined to believe that those lyrics are most likely to please our ears which have been composed more or less completely in the head of the poet, even if they may have been meticulously revised after he had put them on paper. I knew that Scott had beaten out his ballads as he galloped over the hills and that Tennyson had often sung his songs into being while walking in the open air. I was confirmed in this belief when Kipling dropped into my house in New York one day in the nineties and when he answered my query as to what he had been at work

on with the information that he had just completed a long ballad. I asked to see it.

"Oh, I can't show it to you now," he explained, "for it isn't written down yet. But I've got it all in my head and I'll say it to you if you like."

When I assured him that this was exactly to my liking, he began to recite 'McAndrew's Hymn,' walking up and down as he spoke the vigorous and sonorous lines of that superb story in rime, second in Kipling's own verse only to the noble 'Ballad of East and West,' and unsurpassed in the work of any other contemporary ballad-writer of our language. The weighty lines and the picturesque movement of the poem lost nothing in the poet's simple delivery. When he had made an end, I cried out my admiration. And then, after my enthusiasm had cooled a little, I hesitated a criticism.

"Are you certain sure that you have all your engineering technicalities just right?" I asked.

"I think so," Kipling replied. "In fact, I'm almost sure. But I'm going to Washington next week and your chief engineer, Melville, has promised to point out any slips that I may have made."

## V

It was on my return voyage to New York from one of these summer visits to Europe that I had on successive nights two dreams so absurd that I have remembered them. In the first, I had descended into hell, which I found to be a vast region with an iron floor and with an iron ceiling, riveted to iron



stanchions, with the hexagonal nuts visible — just as they were above the berth in which I was sleeping. The atmosphere of this shallow place of departed spirits was murky with smoke and there was only a dim light. But in the distance I saw a glare, toward which I was impelled by an irresistible impulse. As I came closer I discovered that this light proceeded from gas-jets, which I soon perceived to be arranged to form flaming letters, flickering and flaring with the veering of the wind. When at last I stood only a few yards from it, there fell a lull and I was able to read the legend written in letters of fire. There were only four words: “Keep off the grass.” And as I had seen this vision in a dream, the oddity of it did not strike me until I recalled it on waking the next morning.

In the second of these curious dreams, a little more coherent than dreams usually are, I was being taken by the younger Dumas to call on the elder Dumas. Of course, our conversation was in French; and I note this because I am inclined to think it very unusual for a man to dream in a foreign tongue. What the younger Dumas said to me on the way, I never remembered, nor what the elder Dumas said when I was presented to him. What alone floated in my waking memory was what I had said to the man I had come to visit: “Your son is a man of talent; he has written the ‘*Dame aux Camélias*.’ But I am a man of genius; I have written nothing at all!”

No other dream of mine ever equalled the triumphant quaintness of these two. As a schoolboy

I used to dream that I had the gift of levitation, that is to say, of floating thru the air over the heads of my companions. I believe, however, that this illusion is not uncommon in boyish dreams; and I recall how I regretted in my waking hours that I did not really possess this faculty, longing to be able to astonish the teachers by hovering lightly and lazily over their heads.

The only dream at all comparable in its comic unexpectedness with these two of mine was one which came to Elihu Vedder in Capri. He dreamed that an American lady, also settled in that lovely island, had complained to him of the difficulty of washing the gardener's dog to get rid of the ticks in his shaggy hide. To this Vedder heard himself replying that the difficulty was natural enough, since the gardener's dog was a watch-dog, and therefore, of course, it had sixty ticks every second!

And since I quoted this pun dreamed by an imaginative artist in Italy I am led to quote another pun perpetrated by another imaginative artist when he was thoroly wide awake. On one of our voyages to Europe we crossed on the *Celtic*; and the evening before we left New York, Oliver Herford called me up on the telephone to bid me farewell. He asked me the name of the ship that was to bear us away; and some imp of the perverse tempted me to say that we were going over on the *Keltic*.

"Don't say that," was Herford's telephonic response; "or you will have a hard C all the way over!"

I quoted this once to a Scotch friend who capped

it with this: A distinguished English scientist of the last generation did not reserve all his imagination for his investigation into the secrets of nature. He utilized some of it to invent marvellous chapters from his own biography; and on one occasion when he had spun an unusually unbelievable yarn with himself in the center of the coil, the friend to whom he had made this extraordinary confession, looked him in the eye with the direct question: "Clifford, do you mean to tell me that all this really occurred to you?"

And the man of science answered with a swift smile: "Yes; it just occurred to me!"

## CHAPTER XIX

### A SEXAGENARIAN RETROSPECT

#### I

**I**N preparation for the writing of these rambling recollections of a life now stretching out toward the allotted threescore years and ten, I have diligently scanned every page of every one of the series of little diaries in which for forty years and more I have summarily jotted down, day after day, a hasty record of books read, plays witnessed, things done, and persons seen. I have never had the patient application demanded by the more ambitious journal, with its attempt to preserve in minute detail the evanescent impressions of the moment, and with its incessant effort to retain a clear echo of the clever talk that might otherwise go in one ear and out of the other. But I have been able to overcome my customary inertia once in every twenty-four hours and to fix a few of the facts of the daily routine of existence; and these entries, stripped of all color and all movement, implacably impersonal, mere inert and faded and truncated memorandums, are yet possessed of the power to touch forgotten springs and to evoke swift visions of events utterly obliterated from all remembrance.

We are told that in the course of seven years the body undergoes a complete transformation of its

constituents; and we cannot doubt that the mind also makes itself over and not only rids itself of many insignificant things that it has been carrying, but also changes itself more or less, so that we may not easily perceive the evolution of any one of its later stages from any one of the earlier. As I resolutely turned leaf after leaf of the oldest of these tiny volumes, I found myself taken back across the yawning gulf of years and forced to gaze into the face of the unformed lad I was when I started to keep track of my daily doings. The boy is father to the man, beyond all question; nevertheless, this elderly reader did not readily recognize the features of his juvenile ancestor. That distant progenitor seemed to him a very different person, with tastes that he had almost forgotten and with experiences that he had allowed to slip blankly into oblivion.

Of course, I could recall my changes of domicile and the successive homes we had occupied. But I found entries proving that men had come to my house whose names mean nothing to me now and whose faces I cannot call up. Other entries informed me that I had seen plays which I had forgotten totally and which I had been regretting that I had never seen — plays of Molière, for example, the performance of which had made no deposit on my memory, in spite of my early and abiding interest in the greatest of comic dramatists. And there were books I had read, the titles of which had a strange unfamiliarity, even tho the record might reveal also the departed fact that I had reviewed them once upon a time. On the other hand, there

were a few long-distant happenings which had kept their color and their movement and which sprang back to life, swift and sharp in outline as soon as my eyes fell upon the half-dozen abbreviated words of the contemporary entry. Memory is indeed a frolicsome sprite who delights in playing pantomime tricks upon us; and sometimes she seems to be a little lacking in the sense of values, keeping tight hold of many things that are worthless and letting slip more that demand insistently to be retained.

As I have noted, I had not forgotten our successive migrations, and yet I have failed to set down in these pages an incident connected with one of these removals. When Columbia College was about to depart from Madison Avenue and Forty-ninth Street, to expand itself leisurely in its newly acquired property on Morningside Heights, we sold our house on Eighteenth Street between Fourth Avenue and Irving Place and bought one on the corner of West End Avenue and Ninety-third Street. After we were settled in this new home, we chose an afternoon when we invited our friends to drop in for a cup of tea. The house bore a number on the avenue, but its entrance was around the corner on the side street; and naturally enough not a few of our visitors, unfamiliar with our abode, rang the bell of the dwelling next to ours on the avenue, to the increasing annoyance of the Irish maid servant, who was continually called from her own work to declare that hers was not the door of our residence. After this had happened perhaps a dozen times, there came a final ring and a final inquiry as to

whether this was our house. By this time her patience was quite worn out and she answered petulantly: "It's next door, I tell ye — round the corner there. I should think ye'd know that by this time!"

## II

It was in this house in West End Avenue that I received one morning, in the first week of January, 1907, a letter from M. Jules Jusserand, ambassador of the French Republic and historian of English literature, informing me that I had been decorated with the cross of the Legion of Honor. And it was in this house a few months earlier that the meeting had been held which resulted in the establishment of the Simplified Spelling Board, the first solidly supported organization to undertake the formidable task of arousing the two peoples who have English for their mother tongue to admit the necessity of removing the more obvious anomalies of our orthography, if our speech is to be made fit for service as a world-language. There had been earlier not a few sporadic efforts on the part of spelling-reform associations and of the philological societies of Great Britain and the United States, but these had accomplished little or nothing, partly because the appeal they put forth was a little too academic, and partly because they were without funds sufficient for the prolonged propaganda necessary to awaken attention and to overcome prejudice. Andrew Carnegie had agreed to sustain our movement for three years, if

we could secure a certain number of pledges of support from men of prominence, and if we could submit a plan of campaign which approved itself to his shrewd business sense.

At the gathering at my house we outlined our proposals, and when these were laid before Mr. Carnegie they seemed to him feasible. We who had thus joined together were encouraged to add to our number and to organize formally as the Simplified Spelling Board. As soon as we ventured out into the open with our recommendations for making English orthography simpler to use and easier to acquire both by children and by foreigners, it was made a matter of reproach to us that we were "a self-appointed body" — a reproach which would lie also against every public-spirited organization in every English-speaking community. Whenever a wrong needs to be righted or an improvement needs to be advocated, it is customary for a few of those most ardently interested to band together in a body to accomplish the end in view. This is what the anti-slavery men had done, the civil-service reformers, the supporters also of international copyright, the founders of the Sanitary Commission and of the Red Cross Society. It is the habit of our race to rely on individual initiative and on voluntary associations, and those who saw fit to find fault with us for being self-appointed, thereby disclosed their failure to understand one of the distinguishing characteristics of our stock.

Yet I venture to think that the membership of the Simplified Spelling Board when we were at last



ready to begin the work of enlightenment and of persuasion, did not greatly differ from that which a governmental commission would have had if it had been judiciously selected. Any body charged with the duty of suggesting improvements in orthography ought to number among its members, first of all linguistic scholars, experts in the history of the language; second, men of letters, experts in the use of the language; and third, men of affairs, representing the public at large who are the makers of the language. The Simplified Spelling Board enrolled as representatives of the first group not only professors of English in leading universities but also the editors of every important dictionary of the English language — in the United States Webster's, the Century, and the Standard; in Great Britain the Oxford, the Etymological, and the Dialect. As representatives of the second group we had with us at the beginning Mark Twain, R. W. Gilder, Andrew D. White, T. W. Higginson, and William James, and we have since enlisted the assistance of John Burroughs and G. W. Cable. The representatives of the third group included publishers, editors, bank presidents, judges, and heads of leading universities. After a year as chairman, I withdrew in favor of Professor Lounsbury of Yale, who became the first president of the Board — to be succeeded in time by Professor Grandgent of Harvard.

We called ourselves the Simplified Spelling Board because we did not wish to be confounded with the more radical advocates of "fonetic reform," and

because we expected at first to confine our efforts to the acceleration of that process of simplification by the casting out of needless letters which had given us *sun* instead of *sunne*, and *economic* instead of *æconomicke* — a process constantly observable in the history of the language, and aided by Noah Webster when he preferred *wagon* and *almanac* to the *waggon* and *almanack* still acceptable to our kin across the sea. We knew we were enlisted for a long campaign and we began by asking very little. In fact, we almost adopted as a motto Sainte-Beuve's saying that "orthography is like society; it will never be entirely reformed, but we can at least make it less vicious." We wanted first of all to disestablish the superstition that English spelling had been divinely ordained, and that there was a final standard, to tamper with which was high treason if not sacrilege. It was easy for us to show that there has always existed room for the right of private judgment. Which is the proper orthography, *gipsy* or *gypsy*? *controller* or *comptroller*? *checque* or *cheque* or *check*? *rhyme* or *ryme* or *rime*? Who shall decide when dictionaries disagree?

We took advantage of these accepted variations, recorded in long columns at the back of most American dictionaries; and we began by issuing a list of three hundred words already spelled in two or more ways, with the suggestion that there would be advantage in always using the shortest and simplest form. In this first list we did not insert a single simplification of our own invention; and yet even in this modest beginning we could not help seeming

to be radical since we included twelve rather startling simplifications recommended several years earlier by the National Educational Association. Among these were *tho* and *altho*, *thoro* and *thoroly*, *thru* and *thruout*. There was no doubt that some of these twelve truncated spellings looked very strange — more especially *thru*. It is true that those readers who were familiar with the final edition of Tennyson (a devoted spelling reformer) might have noted that this poet always insisted on *tho'* and *altho'* and that he always abbreviated *through* into *thro'*, which is not as satisfactory phonetically as *thru*. It was generally assumed that the Simplified Spelling Board was responsible for *thru*, which was held up to scorn as a horrible example of orthographic mayhem. I confess that at first I myself found *thru* a little difficult to swallow; but after a while I became reconciled to it; in fact I soon discovered that there was a tactical advantage in putting forth one extreme and violent simplification to draw the enemy's fire in concentrated volleys. And I was amused to see that *thru* began promptly to win the favor of advertisers (those masters of simple English), probably because of its appealing brevity.

When President Roosevelt became a member of the Board and issued his order to the Public Printer to adopt our recommendations, then the storm broke and the air was filled with the shrieks of the wounded and the groans of the dying. As a natural result of the shouting and the tumult, attention was called to the lamentable condition of English orthography; and we began to win adherents in

increasing numbers. What we had to overcome was ignorance and the prejudice that is born of ignorance; and our weapon was therefore not argument but information. Our bitterest opponents were often men of letters; and we had to devote ourselves to the "gradual diffusion of intelligence among the educated classes," to use Lounsbury's pertinent phrase.

Lord Morley uttered a shrewd warning when he asserted that "nearly all lovers of improvement are apt, in the heat of a generous enthusiasm, to forget that if all the world were ready to embrace their cause, their improvement could hardly be needed." We have not yet won over all the world to embrace our cause; but we have diffused information. The more vociferous of our earlier opponents have now shrunk into comparative silence, as tho no longer willing to expose their naked prejudices to the public gaze. What we have still to do is to overcome the mighty force of inertia and to arouse the uninterested from their lethargic willingness to let ill enough alone and from their inveterate unwillingness to be bothered by any questioning of their indurated habits. On the whole we are greatly encouraged, since our progress in reaching the ear of the average man has been far swifter than the most sanguine of us dared to hope when the Simplified Spelling Board came into existence. Many of those who themselves refuse to adopt any of the shorter spellings advocated by us are yet perfectly willing that their children shall use simpler forms. Our main effort is now directed toward teachers, who are best

aware of the illogic of the spelling-book and of the pitiful waste of time caused by its cumbrous absurdities. If we can only get at the young while they are yet plastic we have reason to feel confident that the next generation will be ready for a revision of English orthography far more radical than any we dare to urge to-day.

### III

It is with undeniable gratification that I can look back upon the labors of the later Simplified Spelling Board and of the earlier Copyright League; and it is a privilege for me to believe that I had a share, however slight, in the starting of these useful organizations and in their long-continued activities. And I can take pride also in my membership in two other societies, one of them selected out of the other and both of them free from the reproach of being "self-appointed." At its annual meeting in 1898 the American Social Science Association elected one hundred representatives of the allied arts — men of letters, painters, sculptors, architects, and composers — to constitute a National Institute of Arts and Letters; and as I chanced to be one of those thus chosen I was enabled to take part in the organization of this new body and in the slow expansion of its membership to two hundred and fifty. Our beginnings were modest; and our earlier meetings for the reading and discussion of papers pertinent to our several callings were only sparsely attended. Yet the National Institute gained strength year by

year, until at last in 1904 it felt itself able to undertake what had been a chief purpose of its founders — the creation (inside the Institute) of an Academy which should band together and bring into more intimate association the senior practitioners of the several arts.

As I had nothing to do with the method whereby the earliest members of this Academy were to be chosen, I feel free to express the opinion that it was most ingeniously devised, in that it resulted in the selection of a preliminary group of men whose title to be thus picked out was beyond dispute; and it achieved the further purpose of relieving every academician from any suggestion of self-selection. The National Institute decided to begin by choosing seven of its members to form the nucleus of the future Academy; and the ballots revealed that this duty had been accomplished with inexpugnable judgment.

The seven original members of the American Academy of Arts and Letters were Howells, Saint-Gaudens, Stedman, La Farge, Mark Twain, John Hay, and Edward MacDowell — a sculptor, a painter, a composer, and four men of letters. These seven were empowered to elect eight more; and the fifteen were to add five. Then the twenty thus chosen were to select another ten, making thirty in all, whereupon the Academy was to consider itself constituted and at liberty to begin an independent life, with its own constitution and its own officers, and with the right not only to fill all vacancies but also to raise the number of its members

whenever it might see fit. And I may note that in time it decided to enlarge itself to fifty, choosing the additional members at intervals and only after most careful consideration. It also kept its ranks full by electing new members to take the place of those removed by death; and thus it was that in the course of time I was promoted, being the fifty-second member elected to the Academy.

It was intended always to keep the relation of the Academy to the Institute as close as possible. The Academy was a senate, elected out of the lower house, and retaining membership in that house. To emphasize and to make evident this solidarity of aim, the two bodies hold annual joint sessions, the first in Washington, the third in Philadelphia, the fifth in Chicago, and the seventh in Boston, the alternate meetings always taking place in New York. At the sixth joint session in New York, in 1914, we were honored by the presence of M. Brieux, as a special delegate of the French Academy, charged to bring us its fraternal greetings and conveying also a letter from Poincaré, President of France and member of the French Academy, to Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States and member of the American Academy.

The National Institute annually awards a gold medal (designed by one of its members) for excellence in one of the arts, each of these taking its turn in a cycle of seven years. This medal was voted in turn to James Ford Rhodes for history, to Augustus Saint-Gaudens for sculpture, and to James Whitcomb Riley for poetry. As I had been elected presi-

dent of the Institute in 1912, and again in 1913, I had the privilege of presenting this prize to William R. Mead for architecture and to Augustus Thomas for drama. It has since been given to John S. Sargent for painting, to Howells for fiction, and to John Burroughs for the essay.

#### IV

It is one of the pleasant privileges of advancing years to look back and compare the present with the immediate past, and to perceive the alterations, social as well as physical, which have taken place decade after decade. At times some of these changes in national temper and in national tendencies may seem to an aging man to disclose a deterioration in the taste of the American people; but to a sexagenarian who haply retains a little of the spirit of youth most of them approve themselves. It appears to me that the organization of a National Institute of Arts and Letters and the ensuing creation of an Academy would not have been possible in the United States in the mid-years of the nineteenth century. Few would be so rash as to maintain that any of the arts — excepting perhaps the art of letters — flourished in America before the civil war or that we awoke to an appreciation of our own artistic bareness until the centenary exhibition of 1876.

Then it was that an enforced comparison with other nations revealed to us our pitiful penury and aroused in us a recognition of the value of the arts



to a people otherwise as idealistic as ours. The results of this awakening were abundantly visible at the Columbian exhibition, held only seventeen years later. We could gage the progress we had made when we set over against the haphazard planning and the uninspired building at Philadelphia the scientific certainty of the scheme and the artistic fitness of the architecture at Chicago. The white city on the shore of Lake Michigan left in the memory of all who had the good fortune to behold it an unforgettable vision of power and grace and charm. It is perhaps in architecture that our artistic advance is most undeniable; and this is natural enough, since this is a new country with constantly expanding needs which compel us to incessant construction, whereas new edifices of signal importance are relatively infrequent in the capitals of Europe, where the fortunate inhabitants have inherited from former generations most of their necessary buildings. As a direct result of our indefatigable enterprise architecture is a living art here in the United States and its practitioners are compelled to a resolute grapple with problems more or less peculiar to American conditions — problems for which they are finding solutions increasingly satisfactory. Our public buildings, national and State and municipal, are no longer uncouth and amorphous, like the unspeakable post-office in New York. No more are our universities to be housed in fortuitously unrelated halls in a conflicting heterogeny of styles. The dignified assembly of admirably adjusted buildings in which Columbia has sheltered

itself on Morningside Heights is only one illustration of the new spirit which now animates the American people.

Perhaps even more significant is the beauty which is now being bestowed upon edifices so purely utilitarian as banks, office-buildings, factories, and railroad-stations. Not only are the new terminals in New York, in Washington, and in other American cities more stately and more sumptuous than those which adorn any of the capitals of Europe, but they are also scrupulously free from the piebald advertisements which disfigure the terminals in most foreign countries — even in France, where we are wont to expect the final refinement of good taste. This refusal of the certain and ample revenue to be derived from the advertiser's artful aid is added evidence that the dollar is not nearly so almighty over us as alien critics of our civilization have often asserted.

No less significant is the growing custom of calling upon the mural painter and the sculptor to work in alliance with the architect, in accord with the noble example set by the Chicago exhibition. Here again we find ourselves in generous rivalry with France, bland mother of the arts, and far in advance over Germany and Great Britain. These things may be taken to show that we have at last discovered that art is worth while; and they show this even more emphatically than the superb expansion of the many museums in which our cities are now garnering the best that the past has bequeathed to us and the most beautiful that the present is

creating. There is individuality also in our stained glass, in our pottery and favrile glass, in our book-binding and in our wrought iron. In these ancillary arts we cannot fail to see something of the same vitality which is exuberant in architecture. Indeed, it is this sense of fresh endeavor and of ingenious experimentation which is most encouraging. This vitality of the various arts, major and minor, moved an English decorator, resident in the United States, to confess to me once that so long as he could not be a contemporary of Phidias in Athens or of Raphael in Rome, he was glad to be living in New York at the end of the nineteenth century.

## V

In this outflowering of the arts here in America in the final decades of the nineteenth century and in the opening decades of the twentieth, there is no wilful effort for a new departure, no denial of the traditions of the past, no freakish insistence on being novel at any cost. Rather is there a full recognition of the fact that altho this may be a new country its population is truly the heir of the ages, privileged to profit by the best that has been achieved in other lands and in other days. Yet in the evidences of our artistic advance there is also, or so at least it seems to me, a note of our own, audible enough, even if difficult to define with precision. Especially significant is the comparatively recent disappearance of colonialism, of that servile def-

erence to the mother country, which was so obvious in our attitude a century ago.

Even in literature we are far less dependent on Great Britain than we were before the passage of the International Copyright act removed the premium of cheapness which tended to force second-rate British fiction into an exaggerated circulation in the United States. The literature of the English language is still what it always has been and what it always will be, one and indivisible; and even if the British branch of it may be more important than the American branch, our native authors are now dealing directly with our own life and are engaged in revealing us to ourselves. Essential Americanism, the imaginative energy of the people, may not yet have expressed itself in books, in prose or in poetry, in fiction or in the drama, as amply as in more material things, in our inventions, in the best of our superb bridges, for example, in our noble railroad-stations, and in our public parks. Yet we have no real reason to be dissatisfied with our contribution to the literature of the language, since it has recorded not inadequately our aspirations and our strivings, and since at least half-a-dozen of our authors have succeeded in winning a reputation in international competition outside the confines of the English language.

In no one of the allied arts is the improvement more obvious to any one whose memory goes back for half-a-century than in the drama — even if this assertion must not be taken to imply that we have now an abundance of native plays as veracious and

as robust as we could desire. We may be without a group of dramatists able to withstand comparison with the best of those who continue to maintain the primacy of the French in the field of play-making. The average American play may be none too good to-day — indeed, I can recall no period in all the long history of the drama when the average play was even tolerably good — but in the middle years of the nineteenth century the average American play was pitifully feeble, fumbling in craftsmanship, empty of purpose, and devoid of sincerity. Furthermore, it was then likely to be deadly dull — dull beyond any experience possible to-day; and a comic paper of that departed epoch once expressed a well-founded dread when it represented a dramatic critic after dinner ordering a second cup of coffee and saying: “Make it strong — for I’m going to see an American play to-night, and I must keep awake somehow!”

Thin and weak as American plays were then, they were only a little thinner and a little weaker than the British plays of the same period. The main reliance of the London managers was upon slovenly adaptations from the French, in which continental plots were distorted into external conformity with insular social conventions; and these misleading transmogrifications of Parisian pieces were freely imported by our managers, under the lead of Lester Wallack. If these plays were hopelessly insincere as pictures of life in London, they seemed even more absurdly fantastic when performed in New York. From 1825 to 1875 the

English-speaking stage was a realm of unreality on both sides of the Atlantic. At last the right of the alien author to control his own work began to be recognized by law both in Great Britain and in the United States; and as a result the best foreign plays were thereafter presented in translation, retaining their full local color and their original veracity. Then the playwrights of our own language, relieved from unfair competition with the venders of stolen goods, speedily multiplied in number and sought to deal honestly with the conditions of life in their own communities. In time plays originally written in English were actually exported; Bronson Howard's 'Saratoga,' which had been successful in London in a British adaptation called 'Brighton,' was performed in Berlin; Gillette's 'Secret Service' was presented in France, and Clyde Fitch's 'Truth' in Italy and in Germany. To-day a piece which has pleased in New York is almost as likely to be taken to London as a piece which has pleased in London is likely to be taken to New York.

This exporting of American plays to the mother country is not yet quite so frequent as the importation of British plays to America, partly because the old colonial habit of deference to the mother country still survives altho diminished in strength; and partly because we have developed here in the United States only one or two dramatists able to hold their own in rivalry with the foremost of the contemporary dramatists of Great Britain. Perhaps it is proper also to suggest a third reason, which is that the American playgoing public, compounded of many simples,

is cosmopolitan in its tastes and eager to welcome the best which can be borrowed from any other country, whereas the British are still more or less insular in their likings with a persevering preference for the plays which at least pretend to mirror their own manners and customs.

The more accurately and more intimately an author deals with the social organization of his own people and of his own epoch, the more searchingly he presents the special problems which his countrymen are facing, the less likely is his play to win the approval of the friendly alien not necessarily interested in these local questions. No illustration of this could be more significant than the fact that the finest comedy of the nineteenth century, the 'Gendre de M. Poirier' of Augier and Sandeau, has never achieved any permanent popularity outside of its native language; it is too intensely French in its atmosphere to be widely interesting or even to be adequately understood, beyond the borders of France itself. Now, as it happens, one of the most hopeful signs of a genuine dramatic growth here in the United States is that the more promising of the younger American playwrights are seeking to set on the stage the life that seethes about them, clamoring for interpretation. The 'Dame aux Camélias' and the 'Second Mrs. Tanqueray,' 'Magda' and 'Truth,' have heroines whose appeal is to the emotions common to all of us who are more or less sophisticated by occidental civilization, whereas pieces like 'Alabama,' the 'Warrens of Virginia,' and even 'Shore Acres,' relying for their power to

please not so much upon plot or passion as upon their gentler evocation of an atmosphere peculiar to a special time and a special place, cannot expect to find an equal favor in the eyes of those who have never breathed that air and cannot recognize its balmy odors.

It is true that we are still awaiting that portentous entity — The Great American Play — just as we are also not yet able to “point with pride” to The Great American Novel. It may be doubted whether our kin across the sea are able to declare indisputably which is The Great British Novel, altho their branch of our common literature has been adorned by a host of novelists who may fairly be called great. In our branch of the literature of the language we have perhaps half-a-dozen tellers of tales whose greatness is acknowledged — Cooper and Poe and Hawthorne, Howells and Mark Twain. In the drama we have not as yet any outstanding figures worthy to be set by the side of these masters of fiction. Nevertheless, the outlook is not discouraging; we have at least the luxuriant undergrowth out of which and above which we may hope at any moment to perceive a tall tree towering loftily. And the outlook is most encouraging to any one who can recall the arid desert of the American drama in the third quarter of the nineteenth century.



## VI

As I scanned the long record of the books I read in the distant years of my youth, I found myself reminded once more that I had been fortunately able to follow the entire career of men of letters now recognized as masters. I have told elsewhere how I sought out the dingy office in an obscure lane where I could procure the back numbers of the weekly *London*, and so possess myself of the successive stories which were to make up the 'New Arabian Nights' of the then unknown Stevenson; and in like manner I haunted the early footsteps of Maupassant, turning over the smirched issues of the daily *Gil Blas* to spy out the brief tales which Maupassant warranted with his own signature or with the pen-name he affected in that apprentice period, "Maufrigneuse." Thus it was that I was a spectator of the earlier appearances of Daudet and of Zola, of Brunetière and Lemaître, of Austin Dobson and of Andrew Lang, of Henry James and of Howells. And it is because I had thus discovered the signal advantage of keeping step with an author as he marched forward to his goal with a tread which became firmer and firmer, that I was early impressed by the importance of always studying the mightier masters, Molière and Shakspeare, in the strict chronological sequence of their works, a method which seems to me absolutely indispensable to a proper estimate of the ultimate value of their indisputable masterpieces.

My record of books read in the years that are gone drew my attention to the pitiable fading away of the reputations of novelists popular enough in those distant days. It is only two or three decades since the editors of widely circulated periodicals in London and in New York were glad to welcome to their pages the innocuous tho artificial traveller's tales of William Black; and to-day when I chance to cite the name of the author of the 'Strange Adventures of a Phaeton' to young men of literary taste and of literary aspiration I evoke only the blank stare of ignorance. The generation now coming forward knows nought of Black; and it cares as little for Walter Besant, whose cheerful stories used to fellowship with Black's, month after month, and week after week. Time was when the serial enigmas of Wilkie Collins kept us guessing and when the alluring but lurid unveracities of Ouida kept us sleepless. Time was, time is, and time will be; and the writers of "best sellers" have their fates, like other men. Where are the novels of yesteryear? In what dim limbo of deserted circulating libraries do they now repose unmolested, with the dust thickening upon their heads?

All the ancient shrines are not deserted to-day nor are all the idols abandoned to solitary neglect. In the catalogs that settle down on my library-table like autumn leaves, I discover that hopeful venders are proffering complete sets of Marryat, of Lever, and of Charles Reade. But all true book-lovers know that complete sets are for external use only; they are cenotaphs into which their owners

rarely penetrate; and they stand erect with all the stately chill of a mausoleum. Even the most self-satisfied of authors can have no hope of carrying his complete works down with him to posterity; that narrow trail has no room for a baggage-wagon; and he is lucky if he may bear along the salvage that he can stow away in the saddle-bag. Indeed he has no reason to be dissatisfied if the wallet of time is thinly laden with but a single volume if only that one book is as eternally captivating as 'Robinson Crusoe.'

"And the moral of that is" that the popular story-tellers of to-day, the best sellers of the second decade of the twentieth century, must be prepared for the same sad fate. A reputation may rise steadily during a writer's lifetime and swiftly after his death when his contemporaries become unexpectedly conscious of their loss; and then it is certain to decline in the ensuing years, even if it may recover itself after time has winnowed the works that supported it, and selected from out of the mass the two or three masterpieces best fitted to buttress a departed celebrity. It may be doubted whether George Eliot is not now being weighed in the balance of posterity with no certainty that she will preserve her lofty position as the third in the triumvirate with Dickens and Thackeray. Sidney Lanier's series of lectures on the 'English Novel,' in which he held all her great predecessors to be merely trail-breakers, existing only to make smooth her triumphant arrival, seems to some of us to-day sadly one-sided, altho less than twoscore years have elapsed since its publication.

Yet if George Eliot of the masculine mind is in a perilous predicament, we may be assured that the gulf of oblivion is yawning grimly before the feet of most of those whose popularity to-day is less solidly established than was hers in her own generation.

## VII

At last I come to the end of my agreeable task of celebrating myself and of talking about myself to my heart's content. There are many other recollections that I could have dwelt upon and that I have decided to omit from these pages. I have chosen to set down here only the pleasanter memories of my journey thru life; and it has seemed wisest for me to pass over those that were not so pleasant, and not even to hint at those which were bitter. Our joys we share with acquaintances of the moment, but our sorrows are rarely to be confided even to friends of long standing; they are for ourselves alone, and we must bear them as best we can. Many joys have been mine, even if they were never violent; and my sorrows have been fewer than fall to the lot of most men. As it has been my good fortune to find myself "a man of cheerful yesterdays and of confident to-morrows," it has been less difficult for me than for many another to take the world for what it was and to make the best of things such as they are.

If there is any truth in the cynical saying that a pessimist is a man who has just come from a long

conversation with an optimist, then I can only fear that the readers of this record had better begin at once to pray for deliverance from the pangs of pessimism. I am drawing to the end of my days in a position very different from that in which I stood when I attained to man's estate; and few things would have more astonished me than if I could have foreseen then where I should be now. No doubt it was lucky for me that I could have no prophetic vision of my future situation; and no doubt again it is lucky for me that I was born contented as well as cheerful. No one has any reason to be discontented who finds himself as I do, engaged in work that he enjoys, in congenial surroundings with congenial associates — work for which he is fairly well paid and with the result of which he is not altogether dissatisfied.















